Key witness in ₱2.3-B tax credit scam withdraws

Story on Page A-[illegible]

353 imported lovebirds put to sleep, burned

MORE than 300 imported lovebirds from Europe that passed through bird flu-hit Thailand en route to the Philippines were burned yesterday because of fears they could have been infected by the virus.

Bird flu has killed at least five people in Thailand, which is among 10 Asian governments battling the virus in recent [illegible]

[illegible]

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Compensation bill may benefit Marcos

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

"THE LATE dictator Ferdinand Marcos could be one of the human rights victims if a complaint for compensation bill pending [illegible]

[illegible] feedback@inquirer.com.ph | Tuesday, February 10, 2004 | 32 pages | Vol. 19 | No. 69 | website: www.inq7.net

There they go...

ELECTION 2004

Comelec warns bets on illegal campaign posters

By Michael Lim Ubac, Jaime L. Jamilano, Norman Bordadora and Christine O. Avendaño

THE MOST contentious political exercise since the 1986 snap election officially gets under way today with all presidential candidates launching their bid in various parts of metro-rich Luzon.

Three are kicking off their campaign with a high-profile blitz; preacher Eddie Villanueva will launch his bid tomorrow and up, with [illegible] Filipinos overseas in the Araneta Center in Quezon City.

Candidates for national elective office have three months to campaign, while local candidates enjoy a shorter, 45-day campaign period.

The chair of the Commission on Elections, Benjamin Abalos, said he expected the candidates and their supporters to observe the rules, especially in the placing of campaign material. Comelec deputies will [illegible] "no-sign" [illegible]

"We have started all opposite. Actor no sign there were posting illegal campaign materials," Abalos said, noting that the Comelec has deputized the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces.

Even ordinary citizens can make their own reports, Abalos said, but added that violators would be [illegible]

[illegible]

CPP rival says peace talks will collapse

By Gallo T. Maliat Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau
and Cynthia D. Balana

BROWNE points out what the government and the communist-led National Democratic Front want in the resumption of the peace talks in Oslo. However, a breakaway group of the Communist Party of the Philippines said yesterday:

"Both [the government] and NDF will use the resumption of the talks to earn brownie points and propaganda mileage," the Partido ng Manggagawang Pilipino (PMP) said through its spokesperson Patricio Ramirez.

"Neither is interested in using the peace talks to truly negotiate substantial reforms," said Ramirez, who predicted the collapse of the talks.

The PMP is an underground labor group founded by the late Rolando "Kumander Dante" Kintanar, one of the top communist rebels who challenged the leadership of CPP founder Jose Maria Sison, now in exile in Utrecht, The Netherlands.

Chief government negotiator Silvestre Bello III said on Sunday that the government wanted to sign a final agreement with communist rebels before the May 10 elections, but his counterpart in the NDF said the timeline was "unrealistic."

Speaking over dzBB radio, he [illegible] Perez his boss in Utrecht, chief NDF negotiator Luis Jalandoni said yesterday on the eve of the four-day formal negotiations that the two sides would be lucky to complete 50 percent of the issues on the table before then.

Jalandoni points to President Macapagal-Arroyo, a candidate in the presidential race, was also on the mind of CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal.

"It's now obvious that the [the Peru-

[illegible]

Defensor: De Castro not quitting for Roco

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and TJ Burgonio

REPORTS that Sen. Heherson Castro is withdrawing from the race pave, elevated race to give room to former Sen. Raul Roco as President Macapagal-Arroyo's new running mate are unfounded, Mr. Macapagal's campaign spokesperson Michael Defensor said yesterday.

"There's no truth to that. The rumor may have been peddled by President Macapagal-Arroyo's political rivals," Defensor said in a statement. "She will continue to be KAMPI but for the vice presidency and he will be the one vice president of the country."

Mr. Macapagal's camp received reports that rumors about De Castro's withdrawal were circulating in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Defensor said the rumor was intended to prepare De Castro so no longer in the running for the No. 2 position in the [illegible] "I spoke to [illegible]

[illegible]

THEY MAKE it's a perennial scene at presidential [illegible] Senators Heherson de Castro and Loren Legarda, [illegible] attend the wedding of De Castro's adopted daughter Katherine

Noli, Loren shelve fight for wedding

By Rob Cuaresma

BEFORE the battle, a wedding.

Senators Heherson de Castro and Loren Legarda belonged [illegible] night like any old friends they are and pushed to the back burner what is expected to be a [illegible] fight for the vice presidency.

The occasion was the wedding of De Castro's adopted daughter ABS-CBN reporter Katherine, to her office mate, Eric Cruz, at which legarda stood as one of the principal sponsors. The ceremony and reception, held at the St. Francis Shangri-La and the garden of the Sherwood Gardens in Quezon City, became a grand social gathering of political and media VIPs.

De Castro, running mate of President Macapagal-Arroyo, eagerly greeted Legarda as she arrived. Her newscaster's of ABS-CBN before they entered politics, parents posed for the media cameras as they engaged in a brief private conversation.

"Friendship can never be broken by political battles," legarda, running mate of actor Fernando Poe Jr., told the [illegible]

She said that her [illegible] with De

[illegible]

Coming soon on TV: Battle of campaign ads

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Cynthia D. Balana

EFFECT a touch of Hollywood in the TV campaign commercials of President Macapagal-Arroyo and the unseasoned clamoring of challenger in House of her closest political rival, Fernando Poe Jr.

Mr. Macapagal's campaign team has tapped an unnamed Hollywood advertising agency to provide inputs [illegible] for his TV ads. To make sure that the ads "connect" with Filipinos voters, it employed the services of a major Filipino agency that produced Poe's famous line Miguel Bote sa campaign, "Da ang Mga Pinoy[illegible]," which established and maintained the bond between the movie idol and the love found for over a decade.

These moves, according to Mr. Macapagal's campaign spokesperson Michael Defensor,

[illegible]

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TUESDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2005
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Key witness in tax scam withdraws

Task Force 156 accused of bungling case; usec denies charges

By Clarissa S. Batino

A KEY witness in the P2.3-billion tax credit certificates scam said yesterday he was withdrawing from the investigation to protect government bungling of the probe.

Felix Chingkoe, former president of the Chingkoe Group of Companies, narrated Special Presidential Task Force 156 of deliberately weakening the case by "burning" crucial witnesses to let the tax credit scam allegedly perpetrated by his brother and sister-in-law, Faustino and Gloria Chingkoe.

Immunity for sale?

Felix Chingkoe also accused Immune Undersecretary Jesusmoro Rivera Jr., vice chair of the task force, of attempting "to sell" the immunity Felix had been seeking from the government in exchange for his help in the investigation.

"The task force has betrayed two important witnesses. One was Rodrigo Garcia, a former manager of one of the Chingkoe companies, and the other was my wife Rosita Chingkoe. The two were asked to assist the government in nailing down the tax syndicate but instead they were named respondents in two separate cases. Other witnesses are afraid to testify as a result," Felix said in an interview.

The government estimated it had been defrauded of P2.3 billion in revenues as a result of the tax scam. The task force reported to Malacañang that it had filed 622 cases against 14 companies involved in the fraud.

Palace promise

Malacañang yesterday promised it would not stop going after tax cheats until the perpetrators had been made to pay off their tax delinquencies.

In a statement, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the administration's campaign against tax cheats would not end with the filing of charges in court.

"We will religiously monitor the progress of all the cases filed until we are assured of payment of all taxes due the government," Bunye said.

But Felix said most of the cases were "garbage."

He cited in particular the cases filed by the task force against Express Colour Industries Inc. before the Ombudsman on Jan. 31. The task force said Express Colour had been found to have obtained 21 spurious tax certificates amounting to P191.31-million.

The business called up Bunye to get his reaction to Pelez's decision to withdraw, but the Bunye undersecretary was unavailable for comment.

"All I ever asked from the government in exchange for my assistance was immunity for me and my wife. The question I ask is: Is government immunity for sale? Because Ferrer had approached me and offered me a lawyer to facilitate my immunity," Felix said.

Ferrer said he is a senior partner at the influential Cruz and Villaraza Law Offices. He became Finance undersecretary in April 2002.

Felix said Ferrer asked him last year in his lawyer Lauro Tan to help facilitate his and his wife's immunity. According to Felix, Tan is also a business partner at the Cruz and Villaraza firm, as is Dan Buchenau Simeon Marcelo in whose office the request for immunity was granted.

Text messages

"Ferrer told me that if I did not hire Tan, I could not get the immunity," Felix said. He said Tan was charging him an acceptance fee of P500,000 and P1 million once immunity was granted.

Felix kept the text messages he sent Rustia received from Ferrer. One message read: "His fiancee and Chito Tan flew separate from me. The immunity will be handled by Chito, not Boni Ilustre who is Task Force 156 lawyer. Chito is close Li Marcelo, Cousens." Chito is the nickname of Lucito.

Felix said that after sending the text messages to Rustia, Ferrer changed his cell phone number. Ferrer has denied Chingkoe's allegations, saying that only the Ombudsman could grant him immunity.

Ferrer also denied offering Felix a lawyer. He admitted knowing Tan but insisted he was "just one of the many lawyers I know." He said they had worked together at the Cruz and Villaraza firm during the mid-'90s.

"Attorney Ellen Abas was one of the lawyers of Felix Chingkoe after he changed his lawyers many times. Abas referred Lauro Tan to Felix because she assisted one of Felix's lawyer. Nice and Tan worked together in Cabanatuan. I did not refer Tan to Felix," Ferrer had said in an earlier text message to the Inquirer.

The tax credit were created during the Ramalla administration. But in 1999 to get to the bottom of the multibillion-peso tax credit certificate scam that was perpetrated during the Ramos administration, Congress conducted an investigation.

The scam involved 16 officials of the Department of Finance who worked at the Ore Shop Center, an inter-agency group composed of the BOI, the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Customs, and the board of investments, which was set up to issue tax credit certificates to exporters as an incentive.

P5.1-B tax credits spurious

Of the 1900 billion in tax credit certificates issued, P5.3 billion was believed to have been spurious. Of this amount, P2.1 billion was found to be questionable but were identified as having been issued to 11 unqualified Chingkoe companies between 1994 and 1998.

The Chingkoes allegedly sold the spurious tax credit certificates, with more than half going to Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell, which the importers would then to pay their tax obligations to the BIR and customs.

Felix said he was coaxed by his brother Faustino into the company in 1994. But he says familiar with the operations of Chingkoe Group, having been its president, and so agreed to help the government in its probe. With Bill C. Cullen reports A

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THE SOLE SOURCE OF AUTHORIZED GENUINE SHARP CONSUMABLES AND PARTS. IF IT'S NOT FROM US, IT MUST BE FAKE.

Opposition seeks filing of charges vs Manapat

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Christine O. Avendaño

MEETING HOUSE sees its "minority report" continuing, the opposition on the Senate yesterday formally sought the indictment of sacked National Archives Director Marcia Manapat for the alleged fabrication of the citizenship records of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

The motion filed by Sens. Edgardo Angara also sought the immediate issuance of a hold departure order against Manapat by the Bureau of Immigration to prevent her from leaving the country.

Manapat had fled the Philippines when Joseph Estrada became President in 1998. He was then facing graft charges for alleged misuse of Philippine Overseas Economic Funds.

In separate letters, Angara, through lawyer Demaree Jill Raras, referred the report to Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo, Presidential Anti-Graft Commission Chair Dante Gatmaitan, Commission on Elections (Comelec) Chair Benjamin S. Abalos Sr., SC Clerk of Court Luzviminda Puno, Integrated Bar of the Philippines Commissioner on the Discipline Chair Rogelio Vinluan and Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez.

Angara cited in the Senate committee on constitutional amendments, revision of codes and laws, while Raras serves as its general counsel.

Attached to the letters were the committee Executive Report No. 127, with its annexes, and the transcript of stenographic notes of the Senate hearings conducted on Jan. 21 and Feb. 2, 2005.

Angara and the other opposition senators continued to insist that Committee Report No. 127, which recommends the criminal and administrative prosecution of Manapat, had been adopted by the Senate during its late-night session on Friday.

During the voting, the senators, including administration bets Juan Ponce Enrile and Ralph Recto, had not raised a number of objections to the report, but no equal number of administration senators abstained.

Since no one objected to his motion to adopt the report, the motion was carried, said Angara in an interview over the weekend.

"The customary procedures, Senate rules and high court jurisprudence dictate that abstentions are not counted as negative votes," he said.

In an interview yesterday, his colleague Ralph Recto said the position of Senate President Franklin Drilon and Majority Leader Francisco Pangilinan that the motion had not been carried.

Angara said the Senate minutes would show that there had been no ruling by the chair that Committee Report No. 127 had been adopted.

Saycon to snub NBI probe

By Leila B. Salaverria
and Alexis Pupa

SUSPENDED "Sco" Saycon, secretary general of the Council on Philippine Affairs will not appear at the Senate or Bureau of Investigation office, which is conducting a probe of the Kuwait Filipino press conference.

Saycon's lawyer Frank Chavez said the Senate committee does not have the NBI has no power to conduct a preliminary investigation and that it was simply on a "fishing expedition." He informed the bureau through its lawyer Gina Siapno he will not heed the NBI's subpoena because the Cepa officials has not done anything wrong.

"If the NBI has the necessary evidence, it should not file (a case) before the Senate," Chavez said in a phone interview. He added that the NBI would be guilty of usurpation of authority should they force Saycon to heed their summons.

NBI Special Task Force chief Reynaldo Esmeralda said Saycon was subpoenaed as he could shed light on the Jan. 9 meeting at the Manila Polo Club where the Cepa officials allegedly spoke with several military officers, two of whom have been allegedly involved in the bugging Kuwait Filipino and will not be joining in Siapno against Simeon.

"We're not conducting an investigation with any particular charges in mind," he said.

Chavez said that his client will appear at the Department of Justice only if he is served the proper papers. Saycon still has not been served a copy of the subpoena issued by Rebecca Asuncion, aides assigned the Cepa secretary general is being behind the press conference.

In yesterday's privilege speech by the 11th senator of Kuwait Filipino soldiers, Army Captains Nicanor Servilleno Baghosa and Philip Gawaldia, through their lawyer Mary Ann Asuncion, wanted to know if their former comrades Army Captains Rodolfo Rosario, Melvin Encinares and Amador Red have turned into turning coats witnesses.

Servilleno Baghosa and Gawaldia are no longer under court martial for violation of Articles of War 96 (conduct unbecoming of an officer and a gentleman) and article of war 97 (Acts prejudicial to good order and military discipline).

Although Hassan and Servilleno are no longer under court martial, all are have criminal charges for the killing of the 10 and are under the investigation by the National Bureau of Investigation.

Lakas picks 'Jose Pidal'; solon bolts ruling party

By Cynthia Pobre

"THEY plotted me against the wall; I've had enough."

A frustrated Rep. Jose Apolinario Lacson Jr. (Lakas, Negros Occidental) has resigned his Senate post today so he resigned from the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats.

One of a few politicians who organized Lakas in 1991 with then presidential aspirant Fidel V. Ramos, Lacson did not say in his press statement which party he was crossing over to. But yesterday morning, he was spotted at the inauguration of actor Renato de Poe Jr.'s campaign headquarters in Mandaluyong.

Lacson said he was "forced" to leave after he was "stripped" of his positions as Lakas vice president for international affairs and provincial chair for Negros Occidental.

"As if the humiliation (were) not enough," he added, President Macapagal-Arroyo's Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipinas party endorsed Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo, brother of First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, as candidate for the governor's fifth congressional district in challenge Lacson's reelection bid.

The younger Arroyo had publicly admitted to using the alias "Jose Pidal," who was arrested by Sen. Panfilo Lacson of laundering money. Lacson maintains that Mike Arroyo, not Iggy, is the real Jose Pidal.

Lacson sought clarification from party officials about his status, Lacson said. "Unfortunately, I was ignored."

The WORLD

Editor: Lawrence B. Ganzon

Bush shifts rationale for war on Iraq

By Steve Holland

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush on Sunday offered a shifting rationale for the Iraq war—that Saddam Hussein had the capacity to develop unconventional arms if not the actual weapons.

Iraq's weapons of mass destruction was the main reason cited by Bush for the war, in which more than 138 US troops and thousands of Iraqi have died, though no such arms were found and weapons hunters say no such intelligence was found.

Bush addressed the widening fissure between the US economy in an appearance on NBC's "Meet the Press" as his job approval ratings continue to slide and some polls show Democratic presidential contender John Kerry could beat him in the November election.

The president defended putting off the results of a bipartisan investigation of Iraq intelligence until March 31, 2005, well after the election, and he stopped short of saying he would surely bother it, saying only he would be glad to "visit with them," those knowledge and made recommendations.

Bush conceded that it was "correct" that weapons of mass destruction had not been found in Iraq but emphasized a different reason why the war was necessary.

"He had the capacity to have a weapon, make a weapon. We thought he had weapons. The international community thought he had weapons. But he had the capacity to make a weapon real fast

Iraq sends 9-man team to study RP democracy

By Nelson Flores

NOCTOR: Iraq is looking to the Philippines for guidance in its bid to become a true democracy.

Excellent choice for a role model, according to Interior and Local Government Secretary-cum-Jose Lina.

The United States-appointed Iraqi government sent nine representatives over to learn "the art of governance" from Filipinos, and Lina was "happy" to oblige.

It was "surprising," he said, for the Iraqi people to acquire "higher educational exposure ... to more democratic practices such as the Philippine local government."

Lina was at the conference yesterday of a two-week seminar on capability building and local government sponsored by the DILG and United States Agency for International Development.

The seminar was part of a series of "human capacity development programs" for USAID personnel and the "potential trainers" from Iraq.

In turn, the participants are expected to help Iraqi leaders enhance their "capacities for greater public service."

Among the topics discussed during the seminar were: the Public Administration Code in the Philippines, the Philippine Local Government Statistics, the Three-Fold Concept of Participatory Governance, LGUCAN Society-Private Sector Partnership, Trends in Local Governance, Gains and Challenges of Decentralization in the Philippines, and Capacity Building: A Tool for Good Governance.

5 suspected kidnappers arrested

By Christine F. Esguerra and Lala B. Salamero

FIVE suspected kidnappers, including the country's 12th most wanted, were presented yesterday to President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang, while an abducted money lender was recovered in Mindanao, officials said Monday.

The top kidnap suspect was Ronnie Tan, 35, who had a P500,000 price on his head.

A police-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group team headed by Senior Supt. Zosimo Ladrica arrested Tan in his hideout in Barangay San Roque, Sta. Teresa, Batangas, at around 11 p.m. on Friday.

Tan admitted during interrogation of involvement in the 2001 kidnapping of Grace Ong, whose family owns Liana's supermarket chain, according to Chief Supt. Arturo Lomibao, CIDG chief.

Tan, the Ongs' driver at the time, allegedly tipped off his fellow members in the Mercado kidnap-for-ransom gang on the whereabouts of the victim. He was initially reported to have been still-frog when she was abducted but was subsequently released.

Aside from Tan, authorities presented to the President the supposed core of the gang that kidnapped businessman Osmilaya Dio in Pasay City last month.

Rogelio Madfi, alias Mata, was the alleged mastermind, and Emelia Dingia Ore-Financier of the gang, which included Nicanor Aquinaldo and Bobby Legaste. Madfi used to be an employee of the Cha family.

Aquinaldo reportedly admitted driving the getaway vehicle, a blue Hyundai Sonata van, in the Cha abduction.

Relief chief Angelo Reyes said Madfi's gang was behind six cab- or kidnap-for-ransom cases involving Chinese-Filipinos.

The four men were arrested in separate operations in Cabanatuan City, Montalban, Rizal and Tondo, Manila over the weekend by agents of Relief, the National Bureau of Investigation, the police and military.

In his report to PBE Director Reynaldo Wycoco, lawyer Noel Lasala of the Bureau's Reaction, Arrest and Introduction Division (RAID) said Madfi and his cohorts admitted to the kidnapping in Metro Manila of six Chinese-Filipino nationals, who all paid ransom of P32 million each.

Madfi's group was associated with the Wong-Wang group of Alejandro Mdac, which was responsible for the kidnap-slay of Cora-Gila executive Reni Chua Ng, and the group of Cedric Lapid, the RAID chief said.

One was aborted on Jan. 31 in Pasay and rescued two days later in Cabanatuan. Her family says, haggling with the kidnappers to bring down the P15 million ransom demand when the rescue took place.

In Zamboanga, the family of Ramon William Clemente, owner of a bowling firm in the city said Clemente had been freed unharmed by his unidentified kidnappers, the agency France Presse reported.

Gunmen dragged off the 46-year-old businessman outside a police camp in the Zamboanga suburbs on Saturday, 17 days after his abduction, said his brother Rong Clemente. With Prather Lagrajo, AFP

Piatco asks SC anew to review 'final' ruling

WHY? cry do.

The Philippine International Air Terminal Co. Inc. (Piatco) filed on Friday a second motion for reconsideration asking the Supreme Court to set aside its "final" ruling last month that ended the consortium's contract to build the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3.

Piatco claims in its 98-page petition that the high court has "misappreciated" the facts in its case.

It said "Piatco was solely blamed for amendments in the Concession Agreement that it did not actually ratify. Piatco was accordingly considered to be ill-motivated, and castigated for making a mockery of the bidding process, 'when in fact, it did not.'"

But should the high tribunal decide to stick to its original decision, Piatco asked the court to order the implementation of the contract's separability clause and to clarify that the government "cannot validly rely" on the 1987 Constitution to justify any forcible take-over of the consortium's property without due process of law.

The SC had denied "with finality" on Jan. 21 Piatco's first appeal, saying that it was "bereft of merit." Philip C. Salaya

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Anti-graft body apologizes to SC

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE HEAD of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) apologized to the Supreme Court when the tribunal questioned why the agency was merely going through Rhonda Mae Apor's alleged fabrication of documents against presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

The PAGC was proposing [illegible] could be used as an "urgent process administrative investigation" against Mangudadatu and it had issued a subpoena there[illegible] to SC Clerk of Court Luzviminda Puno, wife of SC Justice Reynato Puno. On Feb. 3, the Court en banc ordered the PAGC to explain why the subpoena was issued against Puno.

PAGC chair Dante Jimenez explained in a two-page document: "The subpoena was never intended to disrespect or undermine the authority of the Honorable Court in any way. Its sole purpose, to reiterate, was to secure certain documents from the Honorable Clerk of Court that are said the PAGC is in possession of."

The Supreme Court is overseeing a petition to disqualify Poe from running for president because he is allegedly not a natural-born Filipino. Mangudadatu claimed he found microfilm with this supposed three allegations.

Solicitors Mario Jhonnifer C. Tecson and Jeffy Jovenito Jr. added that the tribunal and not the Commission on Elections (Comelec) had the proper jurisdiction over the case.

DFA: No case vs Lledler

The Department of Foreign Affairs has cleared Philippine Lledler, the country's ambassador to Italy, of using his office in obtaining [illegible] brought from Italy's customs free [illegible].

In a letter to Lledler, DFA undersecretary Franklin Drilon said "the fact-finding mission found no prima facie evidence to establish that there was abuse of diplomatic privileges and immunities with respect to the shipment."

The case stemmed from a letter to a [illegible] who is visiting Italy and found that [illegible] the recently Philippine Embassy to the Vatican in Rome. The advisers and [illegible] received by the final bill of lading and collected the [illegible] which was the Philippine embassy in Italy.

Drilon pointed out that the documents that [illegible] the shipment contained "symbolic seals" to designate used furniture, and that all import duties and corresponding taxes and fees were paid.

The shipment did not collect [illegible] and customs inspectors and [illegible] from [illegible] in commercial quantity and containers or banned items.

Palace clears Cusi

MALACAÑANG has cleared Philippine Forex Exchange-based Alfonso Cusi of graft charges.

Cusi was accused of [illegible] direct ownership in the Large-scale [illegible] and Malacañang's contract to lease the PPA property in Tagaytay, Batangas.

In a four-page decision, the Palace ordered the administrative case against Cusi dismissed, saying to the failure of complainant Virgilio Cardoso to substantiate the allegations.

Cusi was appointed head of the Philippine Forex Authority three years ago. Cardoso, who [illegible] as a taxpayer before the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission last year, said Cusi's "endorsing ownership" of the Garlitos Arena and Industrial Services Corp. constituted conflict of interest.

But the [illegible] Cusi be [illegible] to keep and operate the PPA passenger terminal at the Port of Tagaytay since 1999. At the time, Cusi was president and [illegible] of the firm, which declared an "exclusive upside interest" at PCI Limited.

Until Dec. 1, the PAGC [illegible] Cardoso's complaint saying there was "no prima facie [illegible] to the basis of the evidence as stated." It said Cusi [illegible] documents, including a deed of assignment, indicating that on March 2, 2001, he "sold to a third person" his [illegible] ing" to Ocampo.

Amando Doronila

Ebdane: I'm in control

[illegible] National Police chief [illegible] Ebdane Jr. would be his [illegible] control of the highly politicized organization, despite reports that a good number of Philippine Military Academy graduates at the PNP are silently backing Gen. Hermogenes Esperon to succeed him.

Top officers of the PNP are allegedly protecting Ebdane's [illegible] Esperon, [illegible] to assume an immediate direction so called "[illegible] system" [illegible] within the PNP ranks.

Retired police [illegible] Ebdane's [illegible] and police officers were "actively [illegible] leadership." Whatever, because are [illegible] going around in the field," [illegible] Lupd, [illegible], PNP spokesperson, told the [illegible]. **Christian V. Esguerra**

Nantrel eyes students

[illegible] to an anticipated lack of [illegible] who will vote in the May 10 elections, [illegible] mobilizing a [illegible] Nantrel Bonifacio college students to [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] of election [illegible].

Officials of the National Movement for Free Elections are discussing the feasibility of [illegible] with the Commission on Higher Education, which is in charge of [illegible] schools in the country.

Namfrel chair Jose Concepcion said that the absence of [illegible] [illegible] would be [illegible] next [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

REAL ESTATE

E-mail: [illegible]

Celso Cesar D. Mangaoang

Buhai project another Tagaytay Highlands

But critics warn it is an accident waiting to happen

By Jerry Esplanada

(For a free copy)

THE TIME has come" for Buhai, proclaimed the Bulacan provincial government and Alco Projekt Asia, a Pasig City-based real estate firm.

Buhai is the acronym for Bulacan Housing and Agro-Industrial Inc.

Perched on the slopes of a hill chain in the district towns of Norzagaray and Doña Remedios Trinidad (DRT), the housing project has been touted by Gov. Josefina dela Cruz as "another Tagaytay Highlands" and an example of visionary thinking.

The 800-hectare Buhai, marketed as Buhai Garden Homes, is the planned relocation site for some 10,000 squatter families that will be displaced by the government's multibillion-peso railway project that will traverse parts of Bulacan.

According to Dela Cruz, Buhai is part of the province's total master plan. It will also showcase what the Central Luzon province considers a "total ownership development program."

She believes it will be a big feeder town of Bulacan's growth corners—the Metro-Angat-San Jose del Monte area.

The two-term governor said she wanted Buhai to be a "legacy of her administration."

Dela Cruz's critics, including some local officials affiliated with the administration Lakas-CMD to which the governor belongs, however, do not share her optimism.

LESS than 100 of the planned 10,000 housing units have been built so far. They're sitting on loose soil. MARK KNOLLER

The site was not only landslide prone but also geologically hazardous

Warning

SPECIAL REPORT

The Buhai project is an accident waiting to happen, warned Norzagaray Mayor Reberato Laygan.

"Despite being powdery, nothing [can] stop Buhay," Laygan said as he also pointed out the site was not only landslide prone but also geologically hazardous.

Buhai is sitting on loose, watery granules and would be a "potential Cherry Hills," cautioned the mayor.

The Aug. 3, 1999 housing estate disaster in the Cherry Hills subdivision in Antipolo City killed at least 14 people and injured at 375 houses. Improper quarrying had reportedly led to the landslide tragedy.

"Putting up a housing estate on those slopes is like asking for trouble," Laygan said. He said he did not give them a permit. Town partisans of the 10,07 [sic] anyone road to the project site have either smirked or sneered at," Laygan told the Inquirer.

A similar warning was made by Laygan in November 2003, following the collapse of a portion of the housing project after a heavy downpour.

Like Laygan, municipal barangay chief Maximo Bautista, one of the officials behind the project, is baffled at the developer's bold plan. "That place, which sits on deposits of silica and dunite, is prone to landslides, especially during rainy seasons," Bautista affirmed.

He described as "quite scary" the thought of moving to one of the 20-square-meter row-type houses" being built at Buhai. "Baka masobrahan kami ng lupa pag dun [kami tumira]," Bautista said matter-of-factly.

His summary: utile geologic site of the Buhai engineers as saying the place was "not ideal for building concrete homes because the soil there is loose."

Fr. Carlos Balucan Ayuda, Bangkal Gil de Antolin] the site's soil condition as unsuitable and lacking drainage, [soil-retaining] boxes.

Every time it rains, the tendency of soil particles there is formable to slide, said a 67 year-old resident.

In the neighboring town of DRT, engineer Susana de Guzman admitted she was not familiar with the site's soil composition. "I understand the hill's soil cover had been stripped. The other is not part of my concern," she said. But the [less] we are in Buhai," said Dr. Gutiérrez, DPC's planning and development head.

Asked if he family would consider moving to Buhai, she joked "only if I can have servants."

It is "common knowledge" that those with [illegible] are ideal basement for house construction, Bautista said.

Silicon dioxide is one of the most common components in the earth's crust, according to its website.

In general, sandy particles are loose materials, "with high silicon oxide (quartz) content," said Dr. Fernando Pergino of the Bureau of Soils. "Loam-to-clay loam is a good, if not, the better combination. But even this, when it absorbs too much water, the tendency of the surface is to erode," said the soil scientist.

Project contractor Sumasuber Trans. Jr. dismissed the apprehensions of Bautista and Laygan as mere "Aabo kaba Cherrytay's. Its dismissed "if something like the Cherry Hills disaster] will happen there."

For her part, Dela Cruz told this reporter: "Do you think I will allow myself to be swathed to something that is not safe? I was very careful about that. ... Buhai napo na ulong-ulong gawaan [Buhai sits upon or segregate or loose to] [don't need to] but kind of Buhai to my conscience."

In back up her claims, Dela Cruz furnished the Inquirer a copy of Buhai's "preliminary investigation report" on the "soil strength [a]nalysis of the underlying soil and slope stability of the unconsolidated slopes upon which the proposed relocation site is to be founded."

The four-page report, prepared by ASPLAFE, a Buhai consultant firm, neither said the site was safe nor unsafe for the construction of a housing project.

Recommendations

Instead, it made the following recommendations.

• On the soil's bearing capacity, "the top soil thus were not used as basis for the [new] provision of the soil-bearing property should not be used as foundation material."

• On the stability of the [illegible] proposed slopes, "the [illegible] factor of safety [should] be maintained by a particular [illegible] structure. At alternates method is to increase the factor of safety against sliding the slopes with factor of safety less than the acceptable value of 1.10 is ... because the overburden [soil] will [illegible]."

• On foundation support, it was "highly recommended that foundations of the proposed structures must not be less than [the minimum width] used in the interpretation of the soil bearing pressures."

Nothing wrong

"Standard split spoon and shelby tubes" were used during the soil sampling. "Twenty bore holes were made at the proposed site using the standard penetration test. ... The test holes had a maximum depth of 40 feet and a maximum depth of 60 feet," said the report.

Engr. asserted there was nothing wrong with building homes on mountain slopes, saying "it's okay" in many occasions.

At the same time, he pointed out to the country "there's no [proper] land use. The proper use should be not using the land for housing. It's such a waste of place, in the [illegible] and up with no land. That's the idea why Buhai was put out there."

Dela Cruz said it was not surprising some people had misgivings about the project.

"Normally, when we talk of low-cost housing, prejudice talk of level land. This one have a mountainous topography like the Tagaytay Highlands [in Cavite]. [When the project is completed] Bulacan's squatters will be [feeling] like Tagaytay Highlands residents," she said.

Model community

Actually Buhai is a joint venture of the South Luzon Railways Development Corp. [under the supervision of the Bases Conversion] [development authority] and the Bulacan provincial government "with the assistance of Alco Projekt Asia (Japan) firm," said a Nonoy report on the realty project.

The report described Buhai as a "model new [illegible] community conceived to complement the development of the western part of Bulacan."

Dela Cruz believes Buhai is covered under the [illegible] national government's program for squatters.

In the past, she recalled, the government simply "transferred the [squatter] problem" by [illegible] and not housing.

"[How] they're not solving the problem," said the governor, citing [signing] Dolce in San Jose del Monte and the "[Pabel V. Ramos squatter] relocation" site in Norzagaray.

During ordinary days, "many homes [remain] unoccupied because the people are still in Manila where they live as squatters. They also work there."

Dela Cruz said they "hope to make the problem by providing not only housing, but providing [squatters with] livelihood opportunities. That is important."

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Exclusive preview set for Fifth Avenue Place

RESIDENTIAL Land Corp. will be hosting a series of in-house weekends for friends and business associates to witness an exclusive preview of the Fifth Avenue Place, RLC's newest high-rise residential project. This major event is set at 9 a.m. on Feb. 17, 18 and 19 at the Cameron Parlor Room of the Manila Polo Club.

During the event, guests and prospective buyers will become acquainted with the unique lifestyle and amenities that Fifth Avenue Place can offer.

Fifth Avenue Place is a scant's throw away from international schools, malls and entertainment centers and other lifestyle establishments in the master-planned Bonifacio City. It is an ideal residential address that is just minutes away from the Makati and Ortigas business districts. It is also near NAIA, the south Luzon Expressway and C-5.

Fifth Avenue Place has over 1,000 square meters of open space, [illegible] and an [illegible] pool deck, jogging pathway, badminton courts, playground and swimming pools will allow residents to enjoy an active outdoor lifestyle.

The 36-story residential development's unit mix consists primarily of one-bedroom units which may be combined into larger two- to three-bedroom units. The unit's efficient layout provides the bedroom, living, dining areas with window space that look out onto the metro's skyline. Laguna lakeshore and the posh villages of Bacoor[illegible] and Imus.

Another good thing about the Fifth Avenue Place is its affordable price and very flexible payment options which translates to low monthly payments. According to RLC's [illegible] project manager Emmanuel Lopez, Fifth Avenue Place's at least future residents "affordable lifestyles on [illegible] zone."

Developers worry about cement price hike

By Charlie L. Bolzar

A GROUP representing the country's real estate development sector is appealing to President Macapagal-Arroyo to resolve the spiraling cost of cement that has already affected not just the housing industry but also other sectors attached to it.

The Subdivision and Housing Developers Association Inc. Inc. earlier asked the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council and the Department of Trade and Industry to address the concern and immediately explore alternative schemes to arrest imminent price increases in cement products as well as not jeopardize the housing industry.

"How can the country's home builders continue to cater to these masses who are in need of [affordable housing] if cement prices are unstable?" asked ASHA national president Manny Alfonso, who is also elected vice president and general manager of Filinvest Land Inc.

Our feared that if Malacañang would not act in time, the housing industry could be put in critical status where it will cease to be a major pump primer of the economy due to an imminent decrease in construction activities.

From P110 to P120

According to the recent price monitoring report of the DTI, local Portland cement sold in the National Capital Region now reads P120, or 09 higher than the P110 recorded in December.

Local cement down on the said the increase in the price of cement was due to the increase in the costs of power, coal, packaging and other factors affecting heavy users, and the price depots nation.

If the price gets any higher, it will already result into nearly 12-percentage increase from the current three-to-six percentage increase that the Philippines first and now pays of cement will not exceed P120 per bag in real terms in the National Capital Region, says the end of June.

THE GOVERNMENT needs to something to check the spiraling cost of cement.

Much higher

Outside the NCR, the price of cement is much higher. The prevailing price of cement in Cebu (as of January) is P134, up P7 from last December's P127.

The prevailing price in Cagayan de Oro is P133, compared with the P127 in December. In certain areas in the Visayas and Mindanao, average cement prices can even reach as high as P150.

"Serious monthly spiraling prices will be low as P75 per bag," says ASHA Alfonso.

The situation is very alarming according to SHDA chair Jesus Antonio, who is president of First Holdings Realty and Development Corp. He noted that the price increase has already hampered the production goals of developers and the group's ability to deliver its commitment to produce 100,000 housing units by this year.

No justifiable reason

Alfonso explained that the SHDA sees no justifiable reason for the increase in the price of cement since the inflation levels have remained stable the supply of the year and the current industry's production capacities are still under 50 percent.

"The situation if not immediately resolved will be detrimental to President Arroyo's flagship program on low-cost housing and has a direct bearing on the effective implementation of the program," the private sector, in particular the developers to the overall National Shelter Program," she explained.

Difficult to maintain

"It would be difficult to maintain affordable levels of house and lot packages," said SHDA second vice president Manuel Colayco.

He added that the government should help let the SHDA handle the loss of cement manufacturers toward the control of cement supply. But said, the end is more of consulting process.

Alfonso believes that moratorium on the SHDA supports the government's call to address the concern by looking deeply the problem and should also protect the evolution of prices control developers by ensuring stable prices of all construction materials.

Direct importation

In this regard, SHDA members are planning to import cement directly and has requested President Arroyo to allow the group to import cement for direct importation by industry organizations. Goals of the SHDA is to facilitate the competitive entry of cement in the country.

SHDA – developer members – composed of about 250 small, medium, large and publicly listed real estate companies – are looking at the possibility of pooling their resources to import cement directly to support cement products.

An initial estimate by the SHDA shows a more liable decision is finalized prices of imported cement.

"We would like to emphasize that the request for a lowering of the tariff rate, developers still find it more advantageous to continue importation," Alfonso said.

Danger signs of an inefficient builder

By Alvin A. Arcilla, Ph.D.

HERE in the construction business is difficult. More so these days in which consumer spending on construction projects is slow and builders compete fiercely for clients. Consumers should also do something themselves to help prevent cost and income problems. For some entrepreneurs, simply surviving and staying in business is their sole goal for the year.

We have seen many companies that suddenly close shop. Many have lost money and have been deserted by their clients. If you are a contractor and are struggling in modern times in the difficult and risky world of constructing, recognizing the danger signs early can greatly increase your company's performance and hence enhance your profitability.

BUILDING DREAMS

Danger signs

The danger signs of an inefficient builder include:

• **Too Many Repeat Work**—A customer will always expect shoddy work and this is a sign in which quality can be the biggest issue. Before your prospective client is not left to spend more money on the process in order to get its done.

• **Too Many Problems at the Site**—It is strongly advised to supervised to share the direction of your company and not solve the day-to-day problems. Delegate the matters properly to your subordinates. But make sure that you periodically monitor their performance.

• **Too Much Overtime Work**—If you find yourself working late at night and even on weekends, there is may be time that you review your staffing procedures. You might be in need of additional help in the workforce and open up more details of the job.

• **Late Collections**—You might have a lot of jobs but you are always delayed in collecting payments. Find out the reasons for the slow collection. It can be that you are sending out your billing too late. The details of your billing might also be inadequate and therefore you have to request for more information.

• **Inferior Work**—If a lot of your projects are delayed, then you might be compromising your workmanship too much in trying to cut costs or your capabilities. There may be inferior workmanship which if continued can damage jobs, and, equipment and other resources. Have a detailed schedule on the work that has to be done at the site.

• **Absence from the Jobs**—Big construction projects are commonly laid out to contractors and most of the time, it is found accurate. The lowest bidder gets the opportunity to do the job. If you continuously lost out in a bid due to a very high price quote, then you may have to review your estimates. If other builders can do it at such a low cost, there other cost.

• **Unhappy Subcontractors and Suppliers**—Subcontractors usually work with few families since they cannot get the job directly from the owners. The importance of these to them or him, that they would have trouble done difficultly according with most. For owners had that you trust your suppliers with us that the last time you used them. They will be there.

In dealing with subcontractors and suppliers, the Golden Rule is: "Never Do Unto Your Suppliers What You Do Not Want Your Customers To Do Unto You!"

Hard Bargaining, Leaving You...A high turnover rate can be a sign that your employees are no longer motivated with the job. The turnover rate affects the morale of the remaining employees. Perhaps they are underpaid (sometimes are not obvious. It is the job of the manager or the leader to detect these.

Recognizing the warning signs early can help you avoid your company's downfall. Look at the processes and check the ways on how you can improve efficiencies. There are many areas you can consider for improvement. This includes materials, machines, manpower, methods and the environment in which you work.

Even the largest and successful construction businesses of today experience these problems. The reason they still exist today is that they were able to recognize the warning signs and acted quickly to prevent further damages. You too can do it!

E-mail the author at asarcilla@gmail.com.ph

THE MEPLT opened multipurpose hall of Ferndale Homes

Ferndale Homes opens new multipurpose hall

TO PROVIDE residents a venue to boost about family ties and neighborhood camaraderie, Ferndale Homes Inc. opened its newest multipurpose hall at its mostly developed Phase 4.

A welcome addition to Ferndale's growing related amenities, the 1,000-square meter activity center complex is elevated, well-lit main hall, surrounded by motorized lanai especially designed to accommodate various community events, exclusive gatherings and even fiestas.

The opening of the multipurpose hall further enhances the already vibrant community of Ferndale as it creates an opportunity for neighbors and their families to enjoy this like recreational activities together.

Ferndale Homes is a premier residential community situated right in the heart of Quezon City. With its lush greenery, cozy environment, it offers a Mediterranean experience by modern Filipino families while providing a master-planned community of 1,000 hectares. Ferndale Homes is a premier class neighborhood too with its commercial spaces, essential facilities and village management to provide residents with a comfortable, safe and secure environment, ready access to schools, hospitals and close ties within the area.

A residential development pursuit of Ayala Land Inc., Ferndale Homes is developed to perfect living to cultivate families while being afforded modern conveniences for a quality way of life.

An alternative makeover of unsightly steel windows

By Teresa B. Salazar

THE VISION of the human soul at the very window the face of the house is, in window. Looking at the square steel casement windows of some Filipino houses—with their unsightly, ugly patina caking and creeping rust—one can only wonder if the looking at a person who just woke up the "morning glories" will evoke the scream of their own.

Conventional steel casement windows are panes that are "A" "I" or "E" but and the glass panes are applied with putty—a clay like material that cracks and peels off after a few months. Though the materials used in the frames are cheap, it does not make the overall look is not unlike that of your regular mass-production units.

But it is, so the claim that these luxury housing developers could think of given the available materials and technologies. High-end aluminum windows go for at least P1,000 per square foot. Even the more expensive PVCs cost P1,000 and more. Reconciling pursuing esthetics with affordability has become almost an impossible task.

That task, however, is what the building steel components maker Rapid Forming Corp. decided to undertake in research and development of new windows inspired by what the company executives discovered on an exhibit in China. Ironically, it was there that they chanced upon Italian-inspired coated steel windows that cost fantastic the price of steel casements and those of high-end aluminum and PVCs.

Pretty sight

When the company installed its new coated steel window creations in one condominium in Makati last month, it was a pretty sight. The windows—each set between or more white tubes—was pretty fine, with tubes coated to such a way that they can withstand the ravages of the elements and other corrosives. It is a window (daylight) and the manufacturer designed windows components and piece-type hinges to make installation easy.

Elegant windows

Organization of Socialized Housing Developers of the Philippines chair Governor Herrera, whose Mahogany Villas in Cabanatuan City [illegible] per unit, which is a spacious residential lot and spends to his 24 sq m three-story bungalows, and himself uses the coated steel windows. He chose those windows for his house.

Rodolfo Cenina, president of Mabini Construction and Development Corp. "He were attracted to its elegant appeal. And it is very durable and weight guaranteeing that the rain water will not leak. And it almost wonderful of which is ideal if you are air conditioning."

Rodolfo Cenina, engineering head of Rapid Forming, said it patented and galvanized coated steel windows are manufactured in the country using special machines. Only the frames were imported, but even some of those were used. "The system is imported but the material using is local."

He suggested, however, that for protection against attackers, consumers should install grills and need to have security grilles. Grilles in side glass, however, would be more esthetically pleasing. Rapid Forming—formed at Sapang Palay, Bulacan—also makes Grenadille—can make more than 40 pieces of "450-4" windows (1.2 meters x 1.2 meters) a day.

Comes and it would be more advantageous if windows were mass-produced for low individual homeowners are with since it knows more about the new windows. "He already had three friends during the Expo, and he is an architect, a client, open and a lawyer."

Developer offers Valentine treats

It's about giving more than love on Valentine's Day.

Select real estate developer Laguna Properties Holdings Inc. celebrates the month of hearts. For its lessees by offering participating lessees ladies' membership and golf club membership, in a month-long Valentine's Day of Bringing the Bells Together.

A total of 10 qualified lessees—15 each to Sarah Alexandra Lorenzo and Mr. Ross Lorenzo and Mr. Ross Lorenzo and Mr.—on Cheese Bean a selection steel quartz Tiels Francisco de Santos de Carlos Fernandez, valued at around P175,000 on a golf club membership of Laguna Bells worth P100,000.

Meanwhile, it membership to the prestigious Laguna Bridge Golf Club, each worth P400,000 will go to the first 10 qualified lessee of Alejandro Dy Montes in Lipa City.

The promotion aims to celebrate the character and location of the LPHI development. Its Alejandro Homes in Antipolo, Hacienda Isla Montes in Lipa City, Batangas, and Isla Homes Estates I and II in Laguna.

Set to come next Cool developer, Sr. Alexandra Lorenzo is the first lessee to get a golf club. Lorenzo's fantastic piece on golf was eminently more ideal destinations of work, shopping, and homes.

Mr. Ross Lorenzo I and II are the developer's flagship projects. Its prime, master-planned communities that are ideal especially the grand vistas of its Apolo Bells.

Homes in St. Alexandra Estates I and II are built using the Phenza Building System—an innovative, environment-friendly building technique that provides durability and affordability.

Meanwhile, the current appeal of farming has never been more accessible and twenty-four hours. Its Montes in Lipa City, Hacienda Isla Montes in the prime estates of Lipa City.

Auspicious living at Montgomery Place

MONTGOMERY Place, the flagship residential project of Ayala Land Inc. on E. Rodriguez Avenue in Quezon City, celebrated the Chinese New Year by gathering the residents in a festive event at The Townhall, the community clubhouse of the community.

The celebration started with the Eucharistic Mass that was officiated by Fr. Eli Illanes of Christ the King Parish. Event host and business developer Henry Sitoc introduced with the visitors a background story of the area. He said Montgomery Place is named after the famous Montgomery Hill in the eastern side, which exhibits the feeling of the east. And behind it, you have the San Juan River, connecting the area, which serves as the area's border."

TOWNHALL is the center piece clubhouse of Montgomery Place.

Guests were thrilled to hit the area where a traditional fire dance was performed. The event is believed to bring good luck to the host holding of gongs, cymbals and drums. Lion dance, a symbol of good spirits, God's was also celebrated.

In the afternoon, visitors lined up at the calligraphy station to have their names written in Chinese characters. Some of the residents' family and friends drew in delicate Chinese script by artist Jason Ching in the corral hall, where the Chor Lin paintings of beautiful flowers and birds, and various other subjects were exhibited. A Chinese painting contest was conducted and kicks like to kids and adults.

Montgomery Place is a charming neighborhood, with all the advantages of big city living. Today's families are now living there and value, another 90 units are ramped up to improve this area. The area, mostly will come to life even more.

ENTERTAINMENT

Janet Jackson Super Bowl stunt dominates Grammys

LOS ANGELES—"Bernie Mac" Justin Timberlake spoke-giggled, real name Beyonce Knowles grabbed a slice of honors, and rap duo OutKast won the coveted Album of the Year trophy at the 46th annual Grammy Awards here Sunday.

Timberlake and Knowles each won two awards, but it was his sexy-tease speech, rather than his music, that focused the audience's attention at the star-studded ceremony at Los Angeles' Staples Center.

"Listen, I know we have a tough week on everybody," Timberlake said, referring to the scandal that erupted after the Feb. 1 Super Bowl halftime show, when he ripped a section off Janet Jackson's bodice, exposing her right breast to 100 million television viewers.

Beyoncé chimed in a numbers nut and the nut pointedly spurning his mother in his show. Timberlake continued to count that the events in question unplanned.

JUSTIN! Timberlake apologizes for Super Bowl incident.

Unplanned

"What occurred was unintentional, completely regrettable and I apologize if you guys were offended," he said.

The most infamous Super Bowl flash shattered Sunday's ceremony, with the CBS network broadcasting the show with a short time delay to avoid any similar antics.

Jackson had been slated to appear as a presenter, but was forced to pull out.

"It was an unfortunate incident . . . but we're here for the music," Recording Academy president Neil Portnow said backstage after the show. "I wish it didn't happen. He shouldn't have done it."

Beyonce, who opened the night performing a medley of hits with supporter Prince, remained her role almost away from Destiny's Child by taking home three Grammys, tying the record for a female artist held by Lauryn Hill, Alicia Keys and Norah Jones.

"Wow. This is unbelievable," the 22-year-old queen said as she accepted the Best Contemporary Rhythm and Blues Album award for her debut solo album "Dangerously in Love."

"Performing was enough for me. I'm just so honored," she said thanking her rapper-boyfriend and collaborator Jay-Z.

Beyonce's sought, "Crazy in Love," featuring Jay-Z, won both rap-to-sing Grammys each for Best Rap/Sung Collaboration and Best Rhythm and Blues Song.

She also won Best Female Rhythm and Blues Performance for "Dangerously in Love," and best Rhythm and Blues Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocals for "The Closer I Get To You," with Luther Vandross.

Vandross, who is still recovering from a stroke he suffered last year and was unable to attend the ceremony, got a get-well boost by winning four awards, including Song of the Year, Best Rhythm and Blues Album and Best Male Rhythm and Blues Vocal Performance for "Dance with My Father."

"I want to thank my friends, family and fans for the outpouring of love, prayers and support I have received," he said in a written statement.

Along with Album of the Year, OutKast took home Best Rap Album for "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below," and also won Best Urban/Alternative Performance for "Hey Ya!"

PRINCE (right) and Beyonce (left) perform the opening act of the 46th Annual Grammy Awards at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

Beatles widows

Among the night's top awards, the rest of the four went to British band Coldplay for "Clocks," while Goth-Rock outfit Evanescence took Best New Artist.

Other multiple winners included bluegrass singer Alison Krauss who, with them Grammy, and rapper Eminem who won Best Rap Song and Best Rap Male Rap Solo Performance for his single "Lose Yourself."

The latter Jackson incident was a recurring theme of acceptance speeches throughout the evening.

"I don't want to have the same thing happen that Janet had done," said host Jon Christian Aguilera, planning down at her plunging neckline, as she received her Grammy for Best Female Pop Vocalist.

Returning probably the most unlikely trio of award winners in Grammy history were former 2Live Crew member Brad Clinton, ex-Street leader Mikhail Gorbachev and actress Sophia Loren.

All three shared the award for Best Spoken Word Album for Children, having lent their voices to the Russian folk tale of Peter and the Wolf.

Smokey widows Yoko Ono and Olivia Harrison accepted a special Grammy on behalf of the 8th Beat to mark the 40th anniversary of their exploration into the Ultimate scene.

A lustful Ono, 70, said if John Lennon were still alive he would "Say it again. Come together, give peace a chance and love is all we need." AP

BEST Female Pop Vocalist Christina Aguilera receives award backstage at Jackson's dads.

Bracing change

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

MOST of the foreign-format films that reach our movie screens are Hollywood products. Little by little, however, we film culture is opening up to movies from Europe, a heartening change that is setting another dimension to our apprehension of what the cinema can do.

This month, one such movie is starting its run on a free-local screen: Ole Bornedal's "I Am Dina" stars Mette Bonnevie as a young woman who has a terrible burden from her childhood. She accidentally killed her mother, and was discarded by her father.

The film's central conflict is as arresting that the production was lauded as Best Picture in the World Film Festival in Montreal, Canada, and Bonnevie cornered off with the Best Actress trophy.

How does Dina come to terms with her awesome trauma? With great difficulty—and determination.

Help first comes in her father's friend, Jacob (Gerard Depardieu), who sees his story stole and lived evangelistic conversion. He later wins her, who succeeds in helping Dina gradually wean out of her shell. Unfortunately, her relationship with her father remains cold and tense.

In time, Jacob falls in love with Dina, despite the disparity in their ages. Dina's father leaves her to marry Jacob, and she moves in with his family.

But the tensions of her past continues to haunt Dina, as happiness eludes her, despite her giving birth to a baby boy. It is only when she meets the enigmatic Lee (Christopher Eccleston) that this finds real resources for.

'Touch an Tau'

GMMA Catholic Institute for Enlightened Movie Appreciation gives the film "Touch an Tau" the evaluation: acceptable for mature audiences, and slightly above average for technical merits.

"This heartwarming comedy is more funny than roughly. Viewers expecting gross or toilet humor will be disappointed. Matt Damon and Greg Kinnear deliver terrific performances in extremely opposite roles.

"Cher effectively spoofs herself as a spoiled diva. Comedy scenes and tolerance 'Touch an Tau' successfully blends humor, romance and the transformation of estranged brothers.

"Good works in mysterious ways, and we sometimes have to look even at our misfortunes as blessings in disguise. The movie's conjoined twins manage to turn their roles into stars despite being physically challenged. The movie also tells us that we should not look at people with physical defects as freaks.

Feedback

(Bobi Antonio Aguinaldo of Manila: "Thank you for speaking out against major channels' promotion TV shows that turn loudmouth boorish small brained dunces and participants. I used to enjoy the show's entertainment until it got too offensive. I appeal to advertisers to be more judicious about supporting offensive programs.

"Other western countries offer better programs but they don't have as many viewers. Perhaps, with the help of responsible media like you, more people can come to know that there are alternative learning shows.

"Be assured, Channel 13 advertises education, all programs on the environment. And Tim's Bag is a decent, informative and pleasant show with interesting guests.

"Anyway, please continue to be vigilant against excessively ugly shows that put down women. I pity those who want sexy indecent shows just to appear on television shows.

"And, by the way, the new 'Gimme Da Ba Ba' is also annoying to me. My speed: Americans who need to stay things for a TV show. The old format was better—ruby-dirtbery dumpster!"

'Wild Tech'

DISCOVERY Feb. 10, the Discovery Channel presents "Wild Tech," a unique series that compares technology's achievements to certain phenomena that occur in the animal world.

The series explores the technologies that humans have developed and the solutions that animals have adopted over millennia that provide the same function. Airing as part of "Tech Tuesday, "Wild Tech" telecasts on Tuesdays at 7 p.m.

On Feb. 10, the episode focuses on boulders. With the planet's rapidly growing population, technology must use existing space to build space buildings, tube-traffic and super ships, while animals have to pack more people into less space.

Humans's super solutions already have done away strangers, from blind termites building towers thousands of times their own height with cooling tower them obtained signals, to prairie dogs digging out underground "towns" for millions.

On Feb. 17, the focus is on communication—the backbone of every animal's existence. Humans has developed a range of sweet communications, which have become great learning tools for humans. For instance, dolphins can hear sounds from kilometers away, and communicate using smell. (It is evolution.)

METRO

E-mail to: metro@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

PNP TRAINING SHOCKER

Hepatitis afflicts 46 recruits

By Christel Bigueras and Margaux Ortiz

A TOTAL of 46 police recruits undergoing training in Laguna and Quezon are believed to have been afflicted with hepatitis B.

Chief Supt. Reynaldo Vitella, Calabarzon regional director, however, said four had been confirmed in a hospital in Cavinti, Laguna, after testing positive with the disease.

The rest, who were suspected of also having hepatitis B, have been allowed to resume training along with 800 other recruits.

Philippine National Police officials learned of the hepatitis B cases last week after the Philippine National Red Cross tested the recruits for diseases prior to a blood-letting exercise.

According to Vitella, Red Cross officials expressed reservation over the health of 46 of the potential blood donors.

This prompted him to have those examined at the University of Santo Tomas Hospital in Manila, where four proved positive of infection.

Hepatitis B is a serious viral disease that can be easily transmitted through sexual activity, sharing injecting equipment, toothbrushes or razors, unsterilized tattooing and body piercing equipment.

Because of the discovery, the National Police Commission has recommended that recruits be allowed to undergo testing for hepatitis.

Napolcom officer in charge Linda Malvenda Ilorenda Jesaro also said PNP recruitment tests include only drug, blood typing, neuro-psychological and physical examinations.

She said hepatitis testing would be required in future PNP recruitment.

SOME police recruits, like these getting their hands dirty during a cleanup in Camp Crame, have reportedly fallen sick. PDN PHOTO

Death row dozen get reprieve

By Luige del Puerto and Joyce Abiño

TWELVE of the 14 death convicts scheduled for execution this month have been given reprieve, said Supt. Wenamio Tesoro, head of the Non-Bilibid Prisons.

Tesoro said President Macapagal-Arroyo stayed the execution of the 12 convicts until May.

"Not all the cases are for kidnap-for-ransom," Tesoro said. "Eight of the men were convicted for rape, while four were convicted for murder."

Earlier, the President moved back on her promise not to meet out the capital punishment and ordered the execution of those involved in kidnapping for ransom.

Tesoro refused to disclose the names of the death convicts but added that three were of executions scheduled this year.

Lara and Licayan

The two kidnapping convicts up for lethal injection are believed to be Rolando Lara and Frederick Licayan, who were supposed to have been executed last Jan. 30.

The Supreme Court, however, granted them a 30-day reprieve to allow their lawyers to present new evidence that could prove their innocence.

Meanwhile, the Muntinlupa Regional Trial Court went yesterday the arraignment of kidnapping suspects Pedro Mabunag and Noel de los Reyes since their records were still with the Supreme Court. The arraignment was moved to Feb. 26.

Mabunag and De los Reyes are believed to hold the key to the acquittal of Lara and Licayan.

Pasig barangay men hounded for eating dog

By Luige del Puerto

A HIGH THOM woman has accused 15 members of a barangay security force in Pasig City of eating stray dogs.

Violeta Jadraque, 43, of Barangay Kapitolyo, Pasig City, on Saturday went to the police station after the alleged

is one the men—clad in barangay security uniforms—cooking what appeared to be a freshly slaughtered dog at the back of the barangay hall.

The police are set to ask Restituto Calvez Jr., chair of Barangay Kapitolyo, to have his men report to the station for a police line-up.

Jadraque, who claims to be a member of an international animal rights group, told the police that when she went closer to the barangay hall to find out what the 15 men were cooking, she was horrified to see the carcass of a stray dog and concluded that the men were cooking dog meat.

A few police officers accompanied Jadraque to the barangay hall. But they failed to save the men who slaughtered and cooked the dog, PO2 Raul Bituin said.

If found guilty, the 15 watchmen face up to two years imprisonment and a fine of up to P1,000 for violating R.A. 8485 or the Animal Welfare Act.

ROW ON KATIPUNAN TREES

Shut up, BF tells environment group

By Margaux Diviz

METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando yesterday told loud lunch words for members of an environment group who had accused him of indiscriminately cutting trees on Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City.

"Tarugo! sa sila (They should just shut up)," Fernando said in a phone interview when asked about his reaction to the charges the Concerned Citizens Against Pollution (Concap) would file against him for the alleged cutting of trees on Katipunan.

"These groups should just leave the improvement of Katipunan to the government," Fernando said. "We know what we are doing."

Fernando said the MMDA is now prohibiting private groups from planting trees at public areas and roads.

He said the private groups could lay claim to the trees and plants and "refuse to let anybody...even the government...to touch those in the future for development purposes."

"Sige lawsuit sila (Let them sue)," Fernando shrugged, adding that the roads are for mobility and not for anything else.

"The MMDA will have the final say if plants will be allowed on the roads," he said. "We have to remember that our number one consideration is the safety of motorists and pedestrians."

Fernando added that the Quezon City Katipunan, which "disappeared" during the construction of 10-km does were actually folded and transferred to Edsa's center island.

Fernando reiterated that although he has made sure that "no trees were uprooted," he would not hesitate to file charges against who are found to have harmed trees or would be remodelessly suspected of and subjected to administrative action.

ACACIA trees uprooted to make way for a bus terminal in Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City. [PHOTO BY ALVIN BENAVIDEZ]

Comelec drive may fail to go places

By Tarra Quismundo

EARLIER said from done:

Election officers in Manila want to prevent violations of campaign rules but do not have the means to do it, according to Francisco Antiw of the Commission on Elections District 5 office covering Ermita, Intramuros and Malate.

Local Comelec officials are tasked to watch the compliance of local and national candidates with campaign regulations, particularly in putting up campaign posters.

But such is they want to enforce the law, Antiw said they lacked the mobility.

"We have enough manpower, but all of the six district offices have no vehicles," he said.

"We might just take the jeep or walk," Antiw added.

Task Force Bilis—of Manila's Comelec, entrusted the job of removing misplaced posters, is composed of local Comelec officials, police station commanders and personnel of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

They have the daunting task of keeping watch over more than 80 common poster areas in the city. These include plazas, major parks, basketball courts, public markets, barangay halls and vacant lots.

Private buildings could also be used as poster areas, as long as the owners allow candidates to do so, according to District 6 Atty. Mona and Atty. Jun Calvelo's office on Pennsylvania Road.

The task force would also be monitoring, obtaining and clearing areas now designated by the Comelec, but will still refer to candidates making signs through posters and banners.

Pasay City gets reprieve from garbage

PASAY City's garbage hauliers agreed to collect the city's trash as it heads out of "pool-all" to more modern ways, as conducted that would give them a new contract.

Vitaliz-empire to lang ang contractors to clean up the city and collect the garbage it takes? the service to collect garbage and clean up the city," said Pasay City Mayor Wenceslao Trinidad.

"I just could not leave it as it was. I had to do something," he added. "Pasay ay napaka-dirty (Pasay ngayon)."

The city's four contractors stopped collecting garbage from Pasay's 201 barangays on Wednesday, saying they could not continue with their services without a contract.

Trinidad said he had been seeking authority from city legislators to sign a new multi-million peso contract since December 2003 but they had refused to give it to him.

The city council held an emergency session Friday and decided on retaining the contract of the garbage collectors from 60 to 90 days.

Trinidad said the terms of the resolution agreed by the council were not acceptable to the contractors.

The mayor said he had asked the bidding and awards committee for a negotiated bidding yesterday for the council's approval.

The trustees tried to get the results of the bidding but the mayor said he was not going to do [illegible]

Bloody fiesta in Caloocan

CAMAS and Helen Enriquez on Sunday were attacked and wounded allegedly by a pair of drunken men in Caloocan City. When 911 Assistants Gavin responded to the wounded couple to call for help, he shot and wounded the suspects, as well as wounded in the same house.

As complaint of begging Bentes were celebrating their fiesta, two men, both carrying samurai swords, broke into the Enriquez residence and attacked the couple at around 5:30 p.m., police reported yesterday.

PO3 Cortez, a members of begging Bentes, tried to stop Rolando Mendoza, 37, and his brother Emmanuel, 33, said PO3 Enrique Tomalbel.

When Gavin opened fire, he hit both suspects in their bellies. The Enriquez also hit Jose Mador Lamamano, 26, who was in the next house. Lamamano was hit in the thigh, police said.

The Enriquez couple and Lamamano are now being treated at the Manila Central University Hospital, police said. Edson Sandoval

Lucio Co has P190 million in unpaid taxes on liquor

ON TARGET
Ramon Zuño

BUREAU Lucio Co, allegedly behind the smuggling out of the Bureau No. 1 of several cases loaded with liquor, owes P190 million in unpaid taxes, he investigated once again.

My sources at the Bureau of Customs say Co has refused three million bottles of Absolut vodka, 1.5 liters brought imported from Spain stashed away at his warehouse inside Clark.

Co, say my sources, paid only a nominal amount for the brandy, depriving the government of at least P150 million in taxes and duties.

The forged Chinese businessmen brought in the imported brandy, according to records at the Customs bureau, a total of 295 containers and 6 of the liquor is brandy.

From July to December, 2003, he brought 127 containers to 20 foot vans and 79 containers to 40-foot vans.

Here's the breakdown, according to Customs monitors: July, three 40-foot container vans; 27 in 20-foot container vans; August, 10 in 40-foot vans; September, 20 in 40-foot containers; 24 vans, 10 in 40s, and 30 in 20s; November, 15 in 40s and 50 in 20s; December, 1 in 20-foot container vans.

How much did the former envoy of deposed President Estrada pay for these shipments? Only P27,000,000, my sister says.

And how much was Lucio Co supposed to have paid for these shipments? P190,000,000.

The excise tax on imported liquor is very high. For example, the excise tax on a 20-foot container was loaded with liquor should be P750,000, and P1.4 million on 40-foot one.

But Co, I'm told, was able to pay a total of P100,000 for each container.

If true, links and duties were to be imposed, Co would have been charged P190,000,000.

The government keeps on complaining about lack of collection. It's high time it went after corrupt Customs officials and employees who connive with smugglers.

* * *

The three million bottles of Absolut 1 liters brandy now being kept at Co's warehouse inside the Clark Economic Zone are being repacked into bottles of 750 milliliters and distributed in Manila outlets.

If you're a brandy drinker, you probably have some secret that brand of brandy being sold in liquor stores.

Co's swap for the imported brandy is that he would sell them at his Bangsaid Duty Free shops inside Clark and Subic Freeport Zone.

But how could Pangsaid Duty Free shops consume three million bottles of brandy?

My sources say Co is offering 4% million in specific taxes with the Clark Development Authority for the warehouse full of Absolut 1 liters.

* * *

Bruno Br Felipe of Mandaluyong, San Francisco de Bonos, Quezon City, declared in detention at the Camp Bagong Diwa, Bureau of Police Provincial headquarters.

Felipe was charged with drug pushing. The bad boy nabbed with hard core Shabu on [illegible]

Her relatives swear the man is victim of a police frame-up.

Maria Fe, they say, got the tip of the female barangay captain and some officials. The "informer" suspected Maria Fe was the cause of her separation from her husband. The barangay captain's husband is the wife's brother.

Through the aid of some policemen friends, the barangay had Maria Fe's home raided, according to Maria Fe's relatives.

The cops "found" methamphetamine hydrochloride (shabu) inside the house.

Very coincidentally, during a construction out of court, a certain Alvin Pineda of the District Quezon City police station 10 arrested Maria Fe. Prosecutors that he merely framed Maria Fe at the request of the barangay captain.

But the witnesses was made outside the court and the prosecutor was ready to rest its case.

If Maria Fe's relatives are telling the truth, then the system needs a hero woman.

Will somebody please investigate the allegations of the victim's relatives?

* * *

After a couple of years of sending jokes on text messages, I've become jaded. until I got this joke yesterday that made me willing to laughter.

The joke will have to be told in Tagalog because it wasn't have the flavor of Filipino humor if told in English.

Dumating si Ngongo sa bahay ni kumpare niya ang wala ng Mrs. niya.

"Wife, Ngongo wo' Sipa ka, mga ka ka pa ehem, E, ehem lang naman ang ngongo dito!"

METROBRIEFS

Widow dies in fire

MEDIA! [illegible] Tuesday at the [illegible] Ermita. Thursday of the widow were found on the [illegible] of [illegible] her story by the [illegible] of the [illegible] Fernando and [illegible] Ermita. The fire reached the fifth alarm at 2:37 a.m. before it was out cool at 3:42 a.m., according to [illegible] Magsaysay. Arson investigators [illegible] property damage of P6 million. Julie Salvaterra

Stabbed to death

MANILA, 3rd a.m. 10, on Sunday morning was walking on 10th Avenue in Caloocan City when a man identified only as Rogelio (Mr. Cruz came up to the man and stabbed him to death, police said. At around 1:30 a.m., suspect Albert Salvador Baloa, 28, got into an argument with Isidro Jerry Cruz Jr. in Mandaluyong City. Station dispatch. Said the Suspect and pleaded a knife to Baloa's chest, police said. Baloa was rushed to Ospital and was taken to the Our Lady of Fatima Hospital. Edson Sandoval

Hope for troubled couples

MANILA couples who want healing in their relationship can seek help from a retreat to be conducted in Feb. 13 to 15 at the Mother of Mercy Spiritual Center, 1000 Pinsal Barangay San Jose from the San Pablo Community, Tagaytay City. Retreat talks Formats for rediscovery is a program designed to help heal and renew emotional, fractured and hurting marriages. The program consists of 6 Positive Relational Healing Policy meeting and one day in Sunday afternoon, and six Follow-up Saturday afternoon sessions in Metro Manila. For information, please call Fr. David Gay at 525-1581 or telephone (046) 413-3021 or 0917-451-1 "Sacrificial" at 819-44-11 and 892-5750 or cellphone (0917) 523-2951, and Teresa at cellphone (0917) 528-6995.

Lourdes homecoming

THE LOURDES School of Quezon City Alumni Association invites all alumni to its quasi homecoming on Feb. 29, 4 p.m., at the LSQC High School grounds on Agoncillo Street in Quezon City. The festivity, dubbed "Singing Reve," is in celebration of the school's 40th Foundation Year. For more information, please contact Shirley of the LSQCSA at the 709-6831 or (0919) 709-4628, or e-mail lourdesalumni@yahoo.com.ph.

INQUIRER

OPINION

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Real debate

EDITORIAL

AN APOCRYPHAL story has it that a candidate for a high government post in the United States was asked by reporters what his platform was. The candidate replied, "I am for God, country and motherhood—and I am against sin."

Now, if that question were asked today of an opposition candidate, and if Jaime Cardinal Sin were still exerting a great influence in campaign politics, probably an opposition candidate would say a similar thing, except that in his answer, "Sin" would be capitalized.

"Motherhood statements" has become a much abused term during political discussions. Candidates want to convince as many voters as possible to vote for them, and so they utter motherhood statements that find general approval among the electorate. Who is not for God? Who is not for country? Who is not for motherhood? Who is not against sin?

Beginning tomorrow, candidates will be mouthing motherhood statements, presenting glittering generalities and uttering the usual platitudes when they hit the campaign trail and go to the hustings. But will motherhood statements make for an intelligent, informed dialogue between the candidates and the voters? Don't the voters deserve to be given some specifics?

Election campaigns are getting to be so programmed and so controlled by campaign managers, public relations experts, media handlers and what-have-you that very often, the voters do not see the "real" candidates, "undressed," bare and natural, and do not get to hear their own thoughts. There have been some, if not many instances of candidates winning elections not on their merits but because of public relations makeovers or media hype.

The media, of course, have the principal responsibility of reporting the electoral campaign. Media attention previews the openness of elections and can force candidates to engage in enlightening political debate. But very often the media are so focused on the "horse race"—elections as a struggle for power and a competition for the people's votes—that they fail or report adequately on the other vital elements of a campaign. Things like the critical issues, the candidates' records, their qualifications, their character (including their morals) and emotional stability, their management style, campaign strategy and tactics, and the funding of the campaign.

Some journalists think that the media should determine what the issues are in an election campaign. Others say that it is enough that political reporters just report what issues are brought up by the candidates in the course of their harmonizing tours. Jack Germond, a respected political reporter in the United States, says that candidates on the campaign trail set the agenda for press coverage, "whether the press likes it or not." Germond says that if the press were to stress certain issues, it would amount to advocacy.

In the Philippines, at this critical juncture in its political history, it may be necessary for the media to get the major candidates for president to talk on certain issues they would have to be addressed by whoever is elected in May. Unless the media bring up the critical issues and get the candidates to talk about them, there may be no real and substantial campaign debate in this presidential election.

It would be best if a series of tri-media debates could be conducted among the major candidates for president. It would also be great if a certain debate format could be adopted that would allow the candidates to address questions to one another so that there would be extemporaneous, off-the-cuff exchanges among them. Media handlers could prepare scripts and rehearse answers for candidates in a formal debate, and so voters would not get to see their thinking on their feet. An unorthodox debate format may be better.

The coming presidential election is perhaps one of the most crucial elections in the country's history. The nation has been going downhill partly because of some wrong choices the voters made in recent presidential and legislative elections. The media can help arrest this decline if they can promote intelligent voting. Right now, the media are the best institution in a democracy to get the candidates to talk about themselves, their vision for the country (if any), their stand on the issues, and in general, their idea of what government should do and should be.

Flunkers' treadmill

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

EDUCATION Secretary Edilberto de Jesus' "abrupt" imposition of tougher grading standards was "premature," the Alliance of Concerned Teachers claims. Militants could think.

"Whose ears are bidding?" the Philippine Human Development Report asks. Flawed grading systems, for years, passed flunkers into a cyberspace world that demanded even higher skills, the United Nations Development Programme's publication says.

This university's entrance session "examination." A failing grade of, say 60, is prorated up by bogus points—and say "transmission" is to equating of 75 or more.

In "B. Alew Kindo' 37.5 = 75," PDHR illustrates this self-fooling passion in "achievement" tests.

Elementary students need scores currently 15 of 40 questions (40-15 items=more 160 items in high school; the ten-off score, for 200 questions, was pegged at 95).

Thus, "the minimum passing score is not 50 percent, it's only 37.5 percent." Farm prefers an exclusion and this "transmuted" into 75.

"Why has there been no public outcry? Because it was the percentage of pupils 'passed' that was improved, not the percent scored," PH DE notes.

"Transmutation" is dogging them. Grades are padded (dog dog), so the ranks of flunkers are rolled (hmm).

How? There's a shuffle to the next higher 175 grade, where the savvy process is repeated. Test types fund this flunkers' treadmill. "Automatic for one college and under falsehood for another," was Isaiah's lament.

But tutorial colleges only mask the real ill in our educational rot. And consequences of today's downside detailed spell grave portentents.

In the Third International Mathematics and Science Tests (IMST), our kids were a underscript 38th, among 41 countries. Singaporeans emerged the top-scorers. In the Fourth IMST, we limped in at 37th...second to the last.

One of Our high school students hasn't mastered even language, native or foreign, says professor of Tagalog's Rosario Regino No. 35. They are "semi-illiterate," hard put to read, analyze or compose. They talk in disconnected sentences.

Here rate one the theory all were "Einst Prob. ing, Isaac," says one sign. "Before Pay Bill Please Em The On, Before Em the Off," a grocery sign proclaims. A menu reads aloft: "Ice Kuli wig Drink in Rund."

Racism, not dyslexia as a scapegoat hawk. Through scathing, these children are forced from home for the primary their cousin lack of school. Ang kamoteng dyan! ito, whom work to rise from "poor mahirapan"—on their children can good start.

Poverty incidence falls by 3 percent for every one percent increase in education. Ateneo's Vicente de Vera of the Philippine School of Economics Prof. Ramon Bultaran concludes in a regional priority study. "He who can use a 'writing brush,' the Chinese say, "will never beg."

Global literacy rate is a healthy 64 percent. It leaves over Bangladesh's 61 percent. But "quality deficit" devalues that "achievement."

In today's hi-tech marketplace, the skilled extract the jobs. "If we are so smart, why aren't we rich?" then CNSP representative Bernice Romualdez asked.

Rhetorica diplomas mask a people's deepest hopes being sold short by schools locked into peripheral crisis. Rote, over-worked, underpaid teachers in over-troubled textbooks and overcrowded classrooms.

On the average, 41 students are packed into a grade school class, 50 plus in high school.

Two lessons

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE FIRST lesson is for Bernardo Poe Jr. kids-sir.

I caught him on TV the other night pleading for the media to stop dwelling on his "love child," and, indeed on his other rumored love children." This had been enough people already, he said, child of facts to do to foster the news. He owned he loved her dearly to this day now more than ever. To the solid applause of his audience, who were his favorite people: movie stars, singers and other show-biz folk. "We are picking people," he said, and repeated his plea for the media to leave the love well enough alone.

The lesson, of course, is that you go to politics, you won't be left well enough alone. You will be scrutinized, you will be put under the microscope, you will have all the skeletons in your closet turned before the public. I did warn him of this last year when I tugged him in train of the entire entire than his friends for and two but. I did think at the time he wouldn't run, since he had to make up his mind as soon as late. He had a good point, in part from having composed himself with discretion and in part from getting consistently good press from "movie writers" throughout his ride as his thing.

The last made him especially vulnerable. You can control the kind of things movie reporters will say about you with the judicious application of carrot and stick—covers, punishment, simple reward, a powerful combination—but you cannot control the kinds of things reporters of media generally will say about you. You always because they are independent and bring other because they belong to the other camp and have the comic severe satisfaction—one of motivation—pain of punishment—if they do not take the bait.

I did tell PD he will have his life stitched into tabloids from largely unresolved—he has succeeded in disposing a virtual ban on negative stories about his personal life in the mainstream press pages—and that he should not. His future in politics will be turned into compromise, his smallest indiscretion into scandal. He will not get to Malacañang, if he does so at all, unscathed. He will be scarred for life. The better way is for him to remedial himself with, overcome of his enemies, will not mount the grace of sorrow, or contrite, attention. You want to remain private. Do private. Do not go into politics.

PD's "love child" is just the beginning. More stories will be raised, and it will be thrown at him flesh in the face to awake to note. I don't say he didn't ask for it.

The second lesson is for GMA's dirty tricks department, which is where the matchmaking is obviously coming from. Nobody else has the resources and motive to "find" so many at the surprise or indulge it so flashy an exercise. That is that if they were to stockpile, they might as well know the difference between stock and take in this manner. A charge of acting a "love child" isn't going to make PD look macho; it is going to make him look GMA's.

If they had done their homework, GMA's dirty tricks people would have known that to make candidates in this country has not lost an election for being promiscuous, or unfaithful. In this country, premodernity and unfaithfulness among male candidates are not a big plus, it is a debit. It is not just ignored, it is nullified. Men are supposed to sow wild oats—the more powerful the men, the wilder the more plentiful, the sow. One of course is assigned to wonder why the men to this course my take that literally and favor this country with children rather than just scattered seed. But that is nothing to wonder at really. The culture puts a premium on virility, and children evidence just not having a dysfunctional sexual bread. Flames heard the comment, personally expressed of course, that good for PD, he has kids by other women since his wife can't bear them.

Mental Quotient, a web-based womanizer, rises and now was—and is—much admired. The presidents before GMA rose were known womanizers, though Fidel Ramos was late the climaxes take than Erap, for at least they not advertising it for him. The public is only too did not declare him for himself, it barely laughed at his antics.

Stop of course needs no amplification. Either president fell to the public's ears from being seen as such. Men's to the polls, settled one around the chance as being president.

The charge of promiscuity in this country has been used against men and women, not when you are a man. The same dirty trick gets to be played on GMA or Loren Legarda, and it will be a kiss of death. Not quite incidentally, none than PD, they are the most vulnerable to the charge, or rumor. Legarda for the hurts, they come to as a model as PD (or Erap or Santos) in addressing anything remotely related to this, one or not. This country's feminine adoration for a man having mistresses and eating children is touched only by its intense resentment for a woman having affairs or more having a "love child" by a lover. There, in essence is terms used for men-rogue, charmer, man-of-the-world, the words used for women are extreme status, adulterous, slut.

GMA's dirty tricks people should really be very careful about sending on dangerous ground. They could end up in the wrong end of the thing line by making this country's double standards about men and women.

What could help PD are those stories rumors about his euphoria, which make Noel Sison's much publicized ones look like mild romance. The stories about his poking a .45 caliber pistol at people that piss him off or ticking agents. Or the Diazyana say though, "Mother Dear" story.

But back to Lesson No. 1: He won't escape public scrutiny that easily.

Twisted math

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cabahug

THE LESSER one window or see the Senate committee report, condemning National Archives director Ricardo Manapat on a forgery was carried in the chamber corners, echoes each side view the truth, remarks of it. Committee first Edgardo Angara and opposition allies can then have the validity to carry the report, since the majority's nine abstentions did not constitute a negative vote. But the majority led by Senate President Franklin Drilon, in says the Senate rules are clear: any motion on the report must be voted by a majority. In the case of the report, at least 13 votes are needed from the 23 senators present in the session.

* * *

Interestingly, during the Senate caucus last Thursday evening, no mention or allusion made of the report, as the worded gathering yielded agreement on the specific issues to tackle on the last session after the next day. But the minority apparently had its place it circulated copies of the draft committee report at 5:30 p.m. Friday and then ushered on a nominal voting half an hour later. According to some majority senators, there was a threat to derail the agenda if the majority didn't agree. The issue is hogged for time to even read the report. And the majority was not prepared to call individual votes, where the nine majority abstentions effectively blocked the report.

The minority has chosen to interpret the tactics in their own way. Senator Aquilino Pimentel Jr. called the majority's refusal for "majority" votes to be held plus one. Sens Pimentel even considered that the group didn't have the majority votes. The senators votes are reduced, trouble hoping, verified as to say to the majority's agenda reserved to such tactics. Senator Sonia Estilon replied, "Eh, pwedeno na ng depression tayo eh."

* * *

Rather I avoid the appeal of reality Amy Brunson of San Carlos, M.M. is the first to be celebrating Valentine's Day by conducting a "Loneliness" wherein only 5,000 couples will face by more than 20 seconds to the festivities. Hosted the Gimmick Rock recording record of only 4,000 couples in Santiago, Chile.

Brunson signed that such contest would only appease the prevailing tension and insecurity, is increasingly achieved by TV and radio shows and other mass media, as well as mass communication. "To see how to see everything they do about, even if it's against our Filipino customs and mores," she said, adding that she couldn't ought to establish a world record in independent, unrelated work, are involved. She noted that a big money-making program is planned for that day in the Bluetooth, complete with bands, some performers and shows. Which is not free, but still Brunson shows that interest is double as in Pinoy values?

* * *

If Brunson remains unmoved by this reader's appeal, Embrace, whose Clean Up campaign is sponsoring the canvassing contest, might be available to support. There a hundred ladies led by Elvi Gonzalez, Dr. Gutierrez Sison, Analou de Calero, Dessie Sagi, Ving Melo, Beale Tenkiu and many others, have vowed they will campaign for a "healthy" and "clean" election. If it pushes through with sponsoring the contest, actually it's said that Embrace has to get into this kind of sponsorship after its many good projects in the past. One was the production of two beautiful coffee-table books on Pinoy Pride and Lessons de Bus, complete with photos of how they looked to the ribbon issues when both bodies of issues inspired songs and poetry. The Kissing project doesn't fit the with his earlier kids projects. If I were Unilever's Chair and CEO, Bernard Belson, I wouldn't feel stunned with those potential female hopefuls.

* * *

Last Rep. JG found of the author Ginebra Cruz celebrated his last birthday and his colleagues. Income additionally as "The Raven," gathered to pay tribute to their very sick colleague who gallantly showed up in a wheelchair (get fast, it's the "Reverse" spun gathered in the JP Chapel), this time for a theological service by Andy Fest Amelia Lagata Bonifacio and they all had something to say about Andy But around JP Professor Raul E. Inglot, former OP College of Communication dean, did something more than that. He composed a song in honor of his colleague from Tagalog "Kaibigan" to which it was made of love, which was the Tagalog translation of the poetry written by Pope John Paul II from 1939 to 1979 when he was still Karol Cardinal Wojtyla.

Inglot's poetry translations was first written in Polish and translated into English by famed writer Jesus Peschmann, appearing in Washington, D.C. in 1980. Andy Cruz's Tagalog translation of John Paul's "Tiger Tala," which is only a parade of tragedy, passion, pathos and hope, took over 10 years. By that, he had to secure the Holy Father's permission with the help of the latter's secretary, Rocco Galli. In his introduction, Andy recalled that just before his wife, JP Professor Ma. Luisa Cruz's surgery, Andy's son, also a musician, together with their child, the aspiring child which the monumental translation.

* * *

The 103-page book of John Paul's poetry is translated by Andy, was published in 1999 by businessman Antonio Calanoyan Chua, now Ambassador to Laos, in time for the Pope's visit to Manila for World Youth Day in January 1995. It's also a tribute to Calanoyan's mother, Lucia Lim Chua (she by side with the English version. Regarding 600, however, it has not gained the recognition it deserves, despite the fact that, as Cardinal Sin put it, in the preface translation by Fred Ingkiat it is "indeed a treasure." Its translation was meant to portray several endeavors of the Philippine nation to attain true freedom, peace, justice and prosperity. Perhaps what would narrate "May Tala" from rare acquisition is a critical literary assessment by, say, Fr. Bienvenido S.J.

Total wreck

ATTIMES of doubt I always like to remember the traits of our heroes and the incidents that marked us.

One Rizal is foremost among my heroes. He was a man whose love for his country is unparalleled. Of course, many others died for the cause of freedom and democracy. But what I like most about Rizal was that he wrote, you have, left in his many novels and poems as evidence of things for the country.

Sometimes, it appears that his appreciation of having a great and independent country remains to be appreciated. He was still a country with and reaffirming. Our leaders are in here a jobs. They have a continuing abuse of power, but presidents, but they have mastered the art of politicking than true elections. Our elections are similar to farces. By count and by census, they happen every three years.

Our politicians are little more than entertainers. Only a few distinguish themselves. Most of them are people who are popular and have what it takes. First, people who stood to lead their immediate barangay for power and grew on our consciousness. They climb that by securing seats in the government, their become better persons. Their definition really comes in our history.

As for the several declared by all the campaign slots, we have forgotten the need to remain neutral. The media themselves are the. Platforms of governments are treated as if they mean nothing. Many of us are bored by speeches. What is important to us is whether candidates can compel debate. What we are faced is an opportunity for candidates to articulate. It is again, we neglect to examine the personal stand and views of the candidates on the different issues confronting us.

There has a the cage, and sadly, we cannot distinguish what is real from humbug, as a consequence, we respond to the young innocents and to hedonistic pretensions. We would be celebrities only because they are either on a bunch of walking mistakes, they will perform one very well when they win.

Such a hope always ends up unfulfilled. Politicians look after their own interests. Afterwards do we see how like a prostitute, who has been cast away after she can not serve the politico, refers to cosmetic which power and money accomplish.

I do not think our politicians are giving the youth a good example. I see no Rizal in our midst. Very few among our leaders deserve our respect and confidence.

A few years ago as I remember, we were told that ours was a "democratic revolution." I disagree. Instead, I say that we see nothing less than a coup d'etat. With the upshot of our leaders, it is hard denying what is obvious. For instance, our country is far from what a functioning democracy should be. We do not have least one party. How many Rizals do we need before we can have one? Our country is in a state of disorder is becoming more and our politicians are further regarding our chosen endeavors.

Is this the country Rizal wanted? I hope that our politicians ask themselves that question.

It is time, in my opinion, to, as a nation, to stop and look at ourselves. Consider what we have even dared to be so we can grow our lot. We were once a proud people. Now we just keep inside or exceed us, destroying our fields as something unidentified in our characters. While this naturally helps us understand to learn to, what is more useful is for us to see in the images of our countries in the mirrors with the eyes we qualified to as by our heroes, we must realize that the term "Filipino" is not just a word, it is also a source of much needed, passionate, pro active, responsible and conscious of his acts.

Our country is in dire need, more than ever, to be dedicated to her welfare. We need to see professions above as only the country's interests. Instead, let us think that our all can only thrive positively the time we remain competent and accept things patiently. Otherwise we will not make the country any better than it is today. In now we should have proven tired of engaging in wishful thinking. We must act now while we still can.

Dr. Jesus Rizzo, Jr. is finishing his master's in political science at the Ateneo de Manila University.

YOUNG BLOOD

Christian Rivera

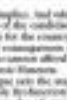
He wants to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? He welcomes contributions from the youth. Interested young and ladies —Ed.

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? He welcomes contributions from the youth. Interested young and ladies —Ed.

Laughing at the candidates

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David



Stage of ever finding a job.

Her choices do matter, he implies. And rightly so: night laugh at the comics of the candidates portrayed onstage, our choice for the country's next president will have real consequences on the fate of other Filipinos who cannot afford to mock performances at the Music Museum.

Jessica's powerful monologue sets the stage for what has got to be "Electric Dysfunction's" hottest preview which involves the oh-so-ready impersonators of the candidates.

Finally despairing of ever coming up with a working formula to determine the most deserving candidate, the stage prophecy is God that the members of the audience) decide who "wants it the most" and who does not deserve the presidency.

The house lights go on, the candidates themselves are stationed to count the raised hands, and the audience is asked to finally put their convictions where their laughs were.

* * *

SO ONE by one the candidates are asked to stand before the audience and be judged, everyone has a good time rooting for their favorite or booing the others (Erap got the most boos).

While I missed a few in the audience against the others were and returning to raise their hands in the classic "Bumbo down" pause, which we were asked to do if we wanted a candidate out, here to hell, the great majority participated with loud gusto in the impromptu referendum.

I thought the show's producers and creators would take the vote issue and continue every night, but Pen Medina, Miguel Faigao, Modi and "Bearing"—in several dimensions. So I was quite surprised that no winner emerged. As fills on the night we were in the audience.

A friend who was present in the next night's performance said Regie Lasco emerged the winner and rode victorious dynamically above the people in the theater. Maybe the audience changed hands, and so for the predominantly middle-class audience was tended to divide their favorites between Mahagdal Arroyo and Lacso.

Admit Lasco though, if she is a real reflection of the characters she portrays, she is an impressive creative performances. I thought, he was, that the young woman portraying Ate the captured her country perfectly. Ate's didn't have that like her model, she was also emotionally challenged.

* * *

BY RUBIAN and I left Music Museum buoyed by two hours of laughter yet strangely sobered by the graphic of our task ahead as citizens and voters.

The main feature of "Electric Dysfunction" may enjoy the luxury of laughing at the foibles of our leaders and those presuming to aspire for the highest office of the land, but how accurately do our countrymen reflect those of the people they choose to lead? Are they, indeed, the human mobility, buttering and patching away while those—our country—fumes? We might find great comic possibility in Fernan Angeli's chairmanship, as to Pedro Lacson's trigger-happy personality, but what of the people who actually seem willing to overlook those failings? Are Pro's angry with her husband and their spacey over Jose Pidal and refused home, with the "Ambidextrous Ate Ate" and Ate Ate laughing but there are serious implications on the quality of governance and leadership.

Then again, if we allowed the so-called "broader issues" to intrude into the broad level entertainment, we might not be able to laugh at all.

Many thanks to the people behind "Electric Dysfunction" are just for the laughs and the good time, but for the moments to prompt from political realities. We have the next few months to go before the election and we owe it to the consequences of our choices.

Salt of the Earth

JT Ignacio

GUERRERO: I had just sent at a party asked me, "How can you stomach working in the government?" I was taken aback by the question of the Chino-Cantonese business man, before me which was laced with contempt. But I quickly realized that few people my age would consider being inside a government office as a career choice.

I can't blame them. Much have been said about our governments, more of them undeserving. Still, I took up the challenge. I want the results of my researches to have an impact on the lives of people who have so little," I told him. "There is room for improvement in our system and I am confident I can contribute to the betterment of our country. If from our work, I need to work for a capitalist or government and it was possible. The computer was an entry point and about getting the consumers' money."

He, also, did modest research," he guessed correctly. Was that study done by a politician?

"Yes, it did. But to build you, I want my researches to be of use to humanity."

A blank stare.

I continued, "You know, Filipinos have the tendency to gain temporary relief by the short-term solutions. Many of those things that matter most to them and their future. Take the case of this actor who left from . . ."

"Mr. Mike. I met him and his cousin in a party. We drank are such a waste. Saying He could've been a great actor. But the guy."

"Yes, I did like as I mean, what they do to their business? I'd rather call it distant-searching."

"Who to work in the government, right?" he asked.

"But what's the difference? Government and their his, drive his and government—the people are the same. Even the citizens don't. We are basically the same—using history to sway to victory."

"Exactly my point," he said. "So why do you want to work for them? Your work is futile."

"It's not," I protested. "We work helps."

But it was clear he could not understand this side of my story. I don't blame him. After all, I was a self-motivated brand jaded that his paintings resembled a Neanderthal hidden cave, the stench was met with a chicken look by extreme second, except me. I had a better laugh.

JT Ignacio, 25, heads the policy research component of the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project of the Department of Education. He is also taking his master's in sociology.

The 'electability' factor

COMMENTARY

Belinda A. Aquino

BUSCALAN—Election elements. They are all over the place. The US and Philippine presidential election short always coincide, but this year they do. And our huge neighbor to the north, Indonesia, is also gearing up for its first presidential election to which the people have to adhere will (on direct) its three chief executive, unlike in previous parliamentary elections. The as a revolutionary shift in the country's political orientation is fortunate, but how it will affect the region is also an jubilee or who have lost all

re—the New Hampshire primary and the Iowa caucus—are the most important because from opening candidates can secure early momentum and media coverage that can propel them to national and other kinds of support. Before the New Hampshire and Iowa events, candidates spend months courting voter support in these two states, and the results of the early election in these two states have a headstart in the process.

When these primaries and caucuses were to an end, it now becomes clear which candidates from the original field have won their respective parties' nomination to run for the presidency. Former Vice George W. Bush seemed to the Republican national convention with the nomination in his pocket, having defeated challengers like Sen. John McCain in the primaries. Likewise, it looks more to the Democratic Party's candidate, Senator John Kerry, already a winner in the impending Democratic primaries.

Thus, the primary or caucus is a "winnowing" process with the principal purpose of selecting which candidates has the best chance of winning the election against the party's candidate. The other purpose may be summed up in one concept: "electability." There is no one definition of this term. It's not even found in the several dictionary. It is a construct of politics and requirements that a certain candidate must have to be considered a winner in the upcoming

Gordon is no lawbreaker

Allow me to clarify the negative perception created in the mind of some readers by the allegations of Antonio R. Ocampo's column, "Gordon's Loose Folly" (PDI, 01/15/05).

The Light and Sound monument project, envisioned by former Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, simply aims to inspire Filipinos to break through the "walls of their minds" in the same manner our heroes broke free from their fetters imposed by foreign oppressors. It was never meant or be a segregated for debate and deliberation.

We caught Mr. Ocampo many times for his advice on the subject up to its final stages. Secretary Gordon acted in accord but has no regret.

On the question of whether Rizal Park is a historical site, and on the legality of the Lapu-Lapu monument:

First, in a letter dated Dec. 1, 2003 to Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, a copy of which was given to the Department of Tourism, Mr. Ocampo, as concerned citizen of the National Historical Institute, offered no objection to the project. Otherwise, we were natural, but not pronouncers. He never informed that Rizal Park has not been declared by the NHI as a national historical landmark. As such, RD No. 1105 does not apply to it, and, therefore, it was unnecessary to secure any authority from the NHI to erect the Lapu-Lapu Monument.

Was Secretary Gordon in violation of EO. 1600 despite the Jan. 5, 2004 NHI letter advising the DOT to "cease and desist from constructing the monument on Agrifina Circle..."?

On Dec. 16, 2003, when the project was in the EIC stating, Mr. Ocampo wrote the DOT again, there was no outright objection to the project, but he did ask (from paper satisfaction) his "no objection to the project" statement.

We believe that there is a link between Lapu and Rizal in the struggle for freedom and independence. While Rizal was the first pen against the abuses of Spanish colonization, Lapu-Lapu, four centuries earlier, stated his heroic life when the price of peace was to have surrendered to the king.

Furthermore, the Lapu-Lapu Monument was contemplated to be an iconic walking point for Filipinos. Agrifina Circle was chosen as its site because its tradition, each Philippine president takes his oath of office at the Quirino Grand Stand in Rizal Park, before a line of statues of nationalists dedicated to national heroes. Thus, in a straight line of vision, a president often takes his oath in one third, silent monument as at the edge of Roxas Boulevard, and converts to other heroes and martyrs and finally to Lapu Lapu, the monument that symbolizes freedom fighter.

Secretary Gordon, in his entire life and career as a public servant, has always respected the rule of law. To describe him as a "law breaker" no basis in fact and is wilful.

—MA. CARINA O. CONCEPCION
Head of Staff
Office of Sec. Richard J. Gordon

LETTERS

No need to die

There is no need for fishermen to lose precious lives from the sinking of a boat. Modern technology has provided us "unsinkable" boats made of a combination of polyurethane, an affordable material available today in the Philippines.

It is unsinkable in good governance than the steel and wooden fishing boats that are presently used. Unsinkable fishing boats are introduced to modern technology.

The executive and legislative branches of government must institute the proper laws to prevent the loss of innocent lives due to boat sinking. The Bureau of Fisheries, Coast Guard, Navy, local government units, barangay captains and all other concern must be ready to comply with a law that requires the use of "unsinkable boats."

Our political leaders should put this important subject matter under consideration and make it a major issue in the upcoming elections.

—SERGIO I. RODRIGUEZ, consultant, 4 Sabero St., Bel-Air 2, Makati City

Ridiculous surveys

SOMEWHERE the media cannot stop these crazy surveys. The editorials, however, should divulge the ridiculous and ludicrous character of these surveys. Like anyone asking "who has experience with the presidency" and such silly questions or foregone conclusions. What matters is not the quality of the question that is sought to be answered. The issue is the function of the editorialists — to do an evaluation of our institutions, events or actions that relate to our country moving, doing or erring. When editorials are absent for this purpose, there is something wrong.

—E. AURELIO A. REY, PEC DEC DCS 20989, APE-IP 96267-90PG

DENR clarifies on illegal logging in Kadarat

THE last reference to the imposition on the "300M to divide collusion in cahoots with illegal loggers in Kadarat town," (PDI, 02/01/05).

We wish to thank you for reporting what the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Region XII is doing to combat illegal logging in this part of the country. However, we would like to make the following clarifications, lest we be misunderstood.

The administrative proceedings being conducted by the DENR XII on the subject case are preparatory to the filing of charges against those responsible in the entering and transport of the 32,021.63 bd. ft. of undocumented lumber. The "lost lumber" were seized from the compound owned by a certain Engr. Joseph Condon, a resident of Kalamangig, Sultan Kudarat.

On the allegations that some DENR personnel are into illegal logging in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, I wish to point out though that as of this writing, we have not found any evidence linking any DENR employee to the said illegal logging case. However, to ensure that reports and allegations are not ignored, we are not ruling out the possible involvement of government personnel.

The investigation indirectly linking former DENR Sec. Antonio H. Cerilles to the logging case is baseless, unfounded and unfair. These are mere conjectures which should not find space in your prestigious newspaper. Dragging the name of former Secretary Cerilles into this case only added to the confusion that the case has whipped up.

—JESUS SARPULON, OIC-regional executive director, Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Guard against No-El

NOW! WHAT is happening these days, it seems that someone is painting a "no election scenario" like May holidays are said to be planning a coup, that opposition is said to be launching a destabilization plot, the Supreme Court ruled the Comelec contract for the automated elections illegal and Comelec employees themselves are opposed to be posting up for a sit-down strike because of their delayed salaries and benefits.

At first glance, it may seem that these incidents are not connected with each other. But the elements they are pointing indicate a concerted effort to stop the running of the May elections in order to pave the way for the postponement.

The Macapagal administration may invoke of high heavens that it has nothing to do with these developments, but on analysis, the only ones that will benefit from this scenario is the Macapagal how well and not administration.

With her popularity ragging and that of her opponents, particularly Fpe and Roco, increasing, the President needs all the time and resources she can muster to hold on to power.

What we insist do is to ensure that the elections pushes through as scheduled and if anyone try to attempt to subvert the verdict of the people.

—ASHLEY B., chairperson, National Network of Spartan Infant Advocates/South Luzon, 11-A Kuting-Kuting St., Quezon City

ECC reply to employee's complaint

THIS pertains to the letter of Mr. Irene Pangan which was published in the business line Dec. 30, 2004, regarding his claim for employee compensation benefits under Presidential Decree 626, as amended.

In his letter, he stated that he had suffered spinal lumbar in Dec. 26, 2004 and that this caused disability it is in no way being disputed. But that does not automatically qualify him as a claimant for the employee compensation benefits, since it has yet to be determined if his injury was work-related.

Please be informed that on Dec. 3, 2004, we requested his Social Security System head office to review his case.

Attached is a copy of the letter to the SSS.

Rest assured that we will inform Bengan of the final action of the commission.

—ELMER D. JOSUEGO, manager, Employees Compensation Commission, 3/F CCC Bldg., 355 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City

Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCE OF LA UNION
City of San Fernando

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATOR

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY PREQUALIFICATION & TO BID

The Provincial Government of La Union, through the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), San Fernando City, La Union, invites suppliers, manufacturers and/or distributors classified accordingly and registered with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) or SEC, to apply for pre-qualification and if qualified to carry:

QUANTITY	UNIT	DESCRIPTION	ABC
1,000	cu.m.	Aggregate Base Course	P 515,000.00
1,000	cu.m.	Class "A" Embankment	1,800,000.00
120	pcs.	18 mm x 4 x 8 ft. Galvanized Iron	180,000.00
80	pcs.	16 mm x 4 x 8 ft. Galvanized Iron	3,200.00
3,000	set/s	Formwork	157,500.00
1,000	cu.m.	Plain Rip Rap	6,000.00
12,000	pcs.	Polled Lobster Nova cultivit	180,000.00
100,000	pcs.	Lobster Stock	
		cultivit lobsters cultivit	600,000.00
10,000	pcs.	Cultivit Nova planters	151,000.00
100,000	pcs.	Cultivit Nova planters	
		Accessories	10,000.00

Issuance of Bid Documents	:	February 15, 2005
Pre-Bid Conference	:	February 16, 2005, 2:00 p.m. Diego Silang Hall
Deadline of Submission of Eligibility Requirements	:	March 08, 2005, 9:00 a.m. Diego Silang Hall
Opening of Bids	:	March 08, 2005, 9:00 a.m. Diego Silang Hall

All bidders shall submit a sworn statement of all its ongoing government and private contracts including contracts awarded but not yet started, if any, whether similar or not similar in nature and complexity to the contract to be bid, as required in the prescribed form. Failure to submit the said statement shall be a ground for disqualification.

All bidders shall comply with the requirements of Section 25 of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

All documents relative to bonds, pre-bid conference, evaluation of bids, post-qualification, and award of contract shall be governed by the provisions of R.A. 9184 and its implementing rules and regulations, as amended and other applicable rules and regulations.

The Provincial Government of La Union reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect contained therein, and to award the suppliers, manufacturers and/or distributors whose proposal is evaluated by the Provincial BAC of La Union the most advantageous to the Government.

Engr. GEOFFREY S. TILAN, CE, D
Provincial Administrator
BAC, Chairman

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE RUNK ITEMS

- AS-IS, WHERE IS BASIS

1		P 1,000,000.00
2		P 1,000,000.00
3		P 1,000,000.00
4		P 1,000,000.00
5		P 1,000,000.00

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

CHILDREN'S CLAMOR
A letter is missing in these children's spelling of Mindanao at a rally in Diaraa City recently, but it doesn't diminish their desire for peace on the island, battered by decades of guerrilla warfare and military operations.

Armed men go to Masbate for elections

LUCBAN CITY—Masbate police director Senior Supt. Romeo Magsalo on Saturday said armed men believed to be from Metro Manila, the Visayas and Mindanao have arrived in Masbate, reportedly in connection with the coming May elections.

He made the disclosure after four unidentified gunmen in camouflage attire fired at one of the houses of Mayor Helen Tuason of San Fernando town (in Tinao Island, Masbate) on Thursday morning. No one was hurt during the attack, he said, since the house was unoccupied.

The attack happened today after a military officer was killed and at least 11 military personnel and a civilian were wounded when New People's Army rebels ambushed them in Barangay Pag-asa, Cawayan, Cbolo, Masbate on Wednesday.

Magsalo said they were investigating the intelligence reports they had received.

He had also ordered the chiefs of police in the province to intensify checkpoints and gun ban operations in strategic areas to avoid a repeat of the Sumagaysay clan election period.

Magsalo said additional forces from the Army and police have already been deployed to different parts of Masbate to reinforce the local police force. These are composed of a company of the 503rd Scout Rangers, the Bravo Company of the Police Regional Mobile Group and a group of militia assets belonging to the 2nd Infantry Battalion.

Masbate is one of the election hot spots included declared by the Commission on Elections at the year based on its experience during past elections.

Bataan is awaiting reinforcers in the Mar 14 elections amid is being challenged by Rep. Vida Espinosa.

She is the first Bicol official to be reported to harassed by armed men, after Mayor Armando Fuentes of Sagnay, Camarines and Bonsogon Ong, June Bello.

The elections are starting to heat up and in Akta, a candidate and a bodyguard of a politician were slain. The killing was believed election-related.

Celestino Cubillog, 34, was shot dead inside a grocery in Bangkal, Aloa Sunday night, said Bicol Supt. Antonio Nebrat, Albay police chief.

Cubillog was running for a seat in the municipal council.

Gregorio Custodio, 44, bodyguard of candidate for mayor Wilmer Awadang was shot dead outside the candidate's house in the town of Buenavista near Tanglag Sunday.

The suspects in the two killings remain unidentified. Joyce Mojillanes, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau with an AFP report

2,000 rally in Dumaguete vs sugar smuggling

By Carla P Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—About 2,000 sugar planters and workers staged a rally on Sunday to protest the drop in mill gate prices of sugar.

They wanted President Macapagal-Arroyo to ban their milling rates than Bacolodnon in their battles in the May elections if she fails to stop sugar smuggling, which they blamed for the low fall in prices.

The protesters marched from the Capitol Legon field to the Bantayan Public Plaza. Some of them carried placards calling for the resignation of Sugar Regulatory Administrator Jesus Arrieta.

They pointed sugar czar-to-be Jun Jesus Arroz in front of the Bantayan Public Plaza and put a wreath on top to symbolize the death of the sugar industry, which they blamed on the lack of enforcement from the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

Mill gate sugar prices dropped last week to a low of P620 per 50-kilo bag (Kg) from P626 at the start of the milling season last year, the retail prices of sugar remained the same. Many sugar producers blamed the low prices on unabated sugar smuggling.

Manuel Lamata, president of the United Sugar Producers Federation of the Philippines, said the rally was only the beginning of their protests.

"If no action is taken on our complaints, I can assure you that the next one is going to be a picketing ... it will be nationwide," he said.

"If the President fails to address the problem, we will definitely go against her in the May polls," Lamata said.

He said Malacañang might have thought their worry was forgotten. "We are desperate because there are really desperate times. We have never encountered the kind of a problem where [there] is more expensive than one bag of sugar," he added.

Lamata said they met President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang and she assured them that something would be done. Still, he added, nothing happened.

"The proof of the pudding is in the price. Smuggled sugar is still coming in," he said.

Lamata reiterated that Ms Macapagal should sign an executive order raising the tariff on refined sugar from three percent to 60 percent to prevent the technical smuggling of sugar.

"She should stop smuggling or he thanks and put the smugglers in jail. That is what we want her to address immediately and after the election. We are sick and tired of promises," said Lamata.

He, however, said he does not support calls for Leviticus's resignation because the SRA chief does not have policy powers.

Ledesma, however, said President Macapagal was very concerned and was doing everything within her power to solve the sugar crisis.

Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella and Ms Macapagal-Chief of staff to hold a summit of sugar industry leaders in Malacañang on Feb. 17 to discuss concerns of the industry.

BIR agent entrapped, faces raps, jail term

BACOLOD CITY—An examiner of the Bureau of Internal Revenue is facing charges for allegedly extorting money from a businessman in exchange for a reduction of his tax deficiency.

Lily Aguirre Deblois, 51, of this city, will be charged on Tuesday with violation of the anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act before the Office of the Ombudsman in the Visayas.

Deblois was detained at the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group headquarters at the Camp Alfredo Montelibano Jr. following her arrest on Saturday in an entrapment operation conducted on 4th floors in Bacolod.

Senior Insp. Mickey Villarosa, AOI of CIDG provincial field officer, said Deblois was caught in the act of accepting P150,000 in marked money from complainant Anthony Gaviola, a barangay captain of Barangay Mansilingan City, Negros Occidental.

Deblois is an examiner assigned to the Bacolod BIR district office that covers Negros Occidental towns and cities from Bago City to Hinoba-an, Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

Vizcaya seeks tighter noose on plant smuggling

By Melvin Gascon
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—Gov. Rodolfo Agbayani of Nueva Vizcaya called on lawmakers to enact a law that would curb smuggling of planting materials in the province, in an effort to protect the thriving fruit industry in the province.

Agbayani made the call amid growing concern over the recent discovery of the citrus virus infection in some citrus plantations in upland Alfonso Castañeda town, some 170 km from Bayombong town.

"What we need at this point is a law that would regulate the transport of planting materials and authorize our (agriculture) personnel to halt the entry of shipments of diseased plants," he said.

Earlier, Parmanes Bernal, retired pomology professor and former president emeritus of the Central Luzon State University in the Science City of Muñoz in Nueva Ecija, said the presence of citrosis virus in orchards in the Cagayan area would have devastating effects on the province's citrus industry.

"If this infection is not eradicated sooner, your growing citrus industry could be wiped out in the next three to five years," Bernal said during a citrus development forum here.

According to the Food and Fertilizer Technology Center website, citrosis, also known as "quick decline," is the most destructive disease of citrus that was reported to have wiped out the citrus industries in many countries. Affected trees become dwarfed and show less vigor, and then die.

Bernal said the virus might have been brought in by some citrus fruits due to the importation from other provinces of infected rootstocks, scions and other materials.

Agbayani, however, said existing quarantine laws do not cover plants, which make checkpoints personnel helpless to check the movement of planting materials to and from the province.

"The province has been free of the FMD (foot-and-mouth disease) because of our effective quarantine system that is backed up by a provincial ordinance. This has given us the authority to do whatever is necessary to prevent the spread of the disease, even in the event of unusual looking infected animals," he said.

"The owners (of stolen animals) were on the route to complain but they always lost because we had the legal basis," he said. "We established the same with shipments of plant planting materials, though these might already be sources of diseases..."

Officials of the California Energy Executives reported that the virus was detected on citrus orchards in three villages in the Cagayan and is a province irrigation and power project in Alfonso Castañeda.

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Hero of Basilan siege reprimanded by AFP

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The Special Operations Command (Socom) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines reprimanded 4 Lantaw, Basilan hero and demoted to a lower base of his rank involved in the beating of three civilians inside a police station at the evening of Oct. 28 last year here.

Socom Brig. Gen. Alan Cabahug, Socom chief, signed the reprimand on reprimanding Army Scout Ranger Capt. Ruben Ganzon who acknowledged here on the June 2, 2003 Lantaw siege.

Cabahugsaid also ordered the demotion of Cpl. Jobert Romero, Cpl. Romulo Somait, Pfc. Arun Mora and Private First Class Antonio.

Ganzon Bay and his men were facing administrative and criminal charges for storming the Isabela police station and beating up Police Assistant IV and his two companions in front of police station.

It turned out that Asistan and his friends were not the same group who figured in a brawl with two of Ganzon Bay's men. Asistan and his friends were just invited by the police to give their accounts of what took place inside the bar.

The beating incident sparked public uproar, prompting the city council to declare Ganzon persona non grata.

However, a few weeks ago, Ganzon, accompanied by his wife, appeared before the city council to apologize and ask for the recall of a resolution declaring him an unwanted person here.

The members of the city council accepted the Army officer's apology but enhanced his request to further study.

In a memorandum, the Socom chief claimed that Ganzon and his men violated the Articles of War 97 and 105.

Because of this, they would not be eligible for promotion within one year starting from the date they received the memo and demotion order.

Apart from the sanctions imposed by the Socom, the Scout Rangers men could face dismissal from the service if they are found to find them guilty of the criminal charges lodged against them.

The charges are still pending with the local court here.

Ganzon Bay however told the Inquirer in an earlier interview that he was exerting efforts to reach out to the complainants. Agudo J. Jimin, PDI Mindanao Bureau

DRAGONFLY
A boy resembling an oversize dragonfly hangs in the hands of Kids Stars Philippines Inc. during the campaign to eradicate dengue.

Church assails military for linking it to NPA

KIDAPAWAN CITY—The Catholic Church here cried foul over the alleged maneuvers drawn by the military on Bishop Romulo Valles' (KBL)

Calling it "blame-on" (red), Diocese of Kidapawan Bishop Romulo Valles, DD, said the attempts of the military to link some of the NPAs poses a great danger to the apostolic mission of the Church.

Recently, the military issued to the letter of Andreas to World Conference said Fr. Peter Geremia and the diocese's Tribal Filipino (TF) Program is supporting the NPA.

"This is a serious accusation ... and I am afraid because this shows that the military is implementing a systematic campaign to destroy and sully image of the Church," Valles said.

Geremia also issued a statement saying the military is back to its "black propaganda against the Catholic Church."

Rue Col. Arnold Quiapo, commander of the military's 39th Infantry Battalion based in Arakan, said some priests gave the name of Geremia and the TF program which he heads during a consultation in protest his views the military and the Lumad.

"Whenever the Lumad said during the consultation was their view. We did not influence them. It was their personal experience while they were together with Fr. Geremia. We can't stop them from telling their personal experience," Quiapo said.

Quiapo said a certain Omar Datin mentioned about the Geremia-NPA links. He said Datin was working with Geremia from 1999 to 2001 as a community organizer.

But he said the military was not quarreling with the Church and actually wondering why it was dragged into the issue. Jeffrey M. Tegios, AIM (Mindanao Bureau)

There they go ...

PRO AND ANTI. Members of Migrante, an organization of overseas Filipino workers and their families, call for the ousting of President Macapagal during a rally in Mendiola (left photo). At the University of the Philippines' campus in Diliman, Quezon City, members of Pro-Gloria, a multisectoral group, sign a statement to unitedly campaign for the President. JOAN BONDOC/INQUIRER

take photos and then file cases.

The incumbent President and two of her strongest rivals will today augment their campaigns with religious rites.

The rallies starting off the campaign with a Mass and the President would like to have it at the highest point of Laguna," Mr. Macapagal's campaign spokesperson Mike Sandoval said.

The campaign kicks off in Cavite, Laguna. Mr. Macapagal will be joined by her running mate Sen. Noli de Castro and 13 senatorial candidates.

Former Sen. Raul Roco starts his campaign with an 8 a.m. Mass in Villa Inzi Miguel, officiated by the influential Jaime Cardinal Sin.

"At the request of the Cardinal and in consideration of his health, the media will not be allowed inside Villa Inzi Miguel but they may wait outside the compound," said a media advisory issued by the division ng Pag-ibig para sa Bagong Pilipinas.

Opposition coalition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. motorcade-to-air line with a 7 a.m. Mass at the San Beda College in Manila, where he spent his grade school years. Poe would be joined by his running mate Sen. Loren Legarda and 13 senatorial candidates under the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

Opposition candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson, however, will get an early start in the province as he is scheduled to hold his campaign rally in Tagaytay City in Cavite.

Lacson spokesperson Lito Banayo said that as of last yesterday afternoon, the campaign schedule did not include a Mass.

"Such activities are considered private by the senator. He may go to Mass but he doesn't believe in making this public," Banayo said of the function.

Macapagal

Press Secretary Milton Alingasa explained why the Mr. Macapagal was starting in Cavite.

"We're starting from a position of strength where you have a clear sense of things," Alingasa said. He said the original choice was Baguio City, but Mr. Macapagal was already scheduled to go there on Feb. 14 for the Philippine Military Academy Sandurot Festival Ceremony.

But Solomon said Laguna was chosen also because of its strategic impact. "We are strengthening our foothold in mega-Manila and Laguna is one of the major provinces within the area of mega-Manila," he said.

From Cavite, Mr. Macapagal and her team will motor to seven other Laguna towns for meetings, caucuses with household leaders and rallies.

It coincides with local bodies will be held in Los Baños in around barangays, followed by another rally in Calamba City at around 4 p.m.

The motorcade will pass through Sta. Rosa and Cabuyao towns before an 8 p.m. rally in San Pedro.

About 5,000 barangay officials and leaders from Laguna trooped to Malacañang yesterday allegedly upon the President's invitation. Around 20 buses were seen lining up along JP Laurel St., outside the Palace, carrying the Laguna folk.

"They were invited in breakfast, some of them to lunch, and were given the yellow "Gloria" caps and T-shirts.

The Laguna group was the latest batch hosted in Malacañang from different parts of the country.

Lacson

A motorcade, made up of at least a thousand vehicles from campaign groups supporting Lacson, will escort the candidate on his motorcade to the province's stretch of its "historic zest" in his campaign to become the second Cayetano President.

The caravan, which starts at 7:30 a.m. from the Presidente Diosdado Macapagal shrine in Pasay City, will pass through several towns in Cavite before arriving up at the Imus town plaza, where Lacson's province chairs and supporters will be gathered.

"We are going to give Cavite to Senator Lacson. He will have more than 100,000 votes [more] than whoever among the other presidential candidates is going to place second in the province," Vice Gov. Juanito Victor Remulla told the Inquirer.

"Executive order loyalty and we would all be behind Senator Lacson all the way," he added.

Remulla's declaration of "solo-senator" support for Lacson is backed by probably the most influential clan in Cavite, which supported Joseph Estrada in 1998 and Speaker Ramon Mitra in 1992.

"[Lacson] and my father [former Gov. Juanito Remulla] share the same values and principles of governance. If one first takes care of peace and order and implements the law everything else will follow," Remulla said.

With the support of Cavite's leaders in 1992, Mitra topped the presidential race in Cavite, two acts handily fourth nationwide.

"Cavite will also be there to rally behind Senator Lacson in his campaign. We would help in the campaign outside Cavite as my brother goes to places the senator "wouldn't be able to visit because of the tight schedule," Remulla said, referring to Cavite Rep. Gilbert Remulla, a key Lacson supporter in the House of Representatives.

Poe

After the Mass in San Beda, Poe launches his campaign with a "grand rally" at 9 a.m. at the Cuneta Astrodome in Pasay.

Rodolfo Reyes, media liaison chief of Poe's campaign, said the original plan was to hold the first day of campaign in the actor's hometown in San Carlos City in Pangasinan. But the plan was changed and now they will hold it in Manila instead.

"It will be quite a show," Reyes told the Inquirer, noting that Poe KNN's supporters, including Poe's colleagues in show business, would be there to support the popular movie actor.

Reyes said the opposition presidential candidate was likely to announce his program of government in the proclamation rally.

Video screens will be provided outside the Cuneta Astrodome, which can only accommodate a crowd of 10,000.

Reyes said Poe's first out-of-town trip would be in the northern and Central Luzon areas. Poe will lead a motorcade in Bulacan on Wednesday and will head to Pampanga on Thursday. He will go to Zambales and Bataan on Friday.

The weekends will see the KNN standard-bearer and fellow candidate Legarda hit Bicol on Saturday and Pangasinan on Sunday.

Poe's activities will be a departure from the traditional campaigns of the past, said Sen. Edgardo Angara.

Angara said more noteworthy and artistic-way campaigns will be mounted, rather than rallies in the next three months. "We want to reach out to more people and we want to get to as many places as possible," he said in a phone interview.

In essence, Poe will be "farm-accenting" the countryside. This will mean more areas covered and more exposure for Poe, Angara said. "It's going to be a fast-moving campaign."

Roco

After the Mass in Villa Inzi Miguel, which the Roco campaign has dubbed "Misa ng Bayan (Offering to God)," the candidate and his running mate Herminio Aquino will visit four points in Metro Manila, and then end with a 6 p.m. prayer vigil at the Quezon Memorial Circle dubbed "Walk to Reform (Offering to the Nation)."

Roco, Aquino and their senatorial slate will meet with children at the Jose Rizal University in Mandaluyong City, then proceed to Manila de Pelorro, also in Mandaluyong, for a rest of the public market at 10 a.m.

An hour and a half later, they will break bread with Roco's "Batch Antioy" at the SM Megamall Food Court. Roco must with the urban poor representatives at Dili Compound, Homes Del 66, Barangay 73 in Caloocan City.

The state-wanted to conduct to kick off rally today in Dasol. Roco will then head to Quezon City, solidify in Lat 1998 rite—but the lack of commercial flights forced organizers to push it to tomorrow.

Tomorrow, the campaign heads outside Metro Manila. First stop is Naga City for a string of activities, such as a Mass at the historic Naga Cathedral and interpop hopping before going to Pili, Camarines Sur, for a public meeting.

The candidates will return to Naga for a medical mission, a market visit and the much-awaited march to Plaza Quezon for a "grand rally." A "Concert of Hope" will follow suit.

On Thursday, the group will proceed to Legazpi City for a motorcade and media briefing then attend two political rallies in Tabaco, Albay.

Before the Plaza Hangar rose, the ticket is slated to go to Cebu province on Friday and Saturday. With reports from Martin F. Murfil and Jeff C. Tabucchi jr.

Coming soon on TV: Battle of campaign ads

PRESIDENTIAL aspirant Fernando Poe Jr. talks with children as his running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, prepares for a taping of their campaign commercial in Quezon City. CHITO A. CHAVEZ

shows have seriously hit campaigns are taking the battle of the TV ads among the presidentiables.

Dove at the Poe camp, Manuel Urbano Jr., popularly known as Mr. Shoot of TV's "Shotgunlaw Barbecue," is directing the campaign ads of not only the actor but also of his running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda.

Asked on Saturday to comment on the experience, Urbano said: "Mainit ako riyanpo [I'm happy of course!). I have a big exposure, kilig. I'm not working with just anybody. Loren and FPJ rin."

Equitable sharing

Mr. Macapagal Gloria Poe in the Inland Weather Bureau' January survey on presidential choices: 27 percent to his 56 percent.

Nevertheless, Malacañang has declared the government-run media outlets open to all candidates, including those from the opposition, but spokesperson Ignacio Bunye announced yesterday.

"The general principle is equitable sharing of time or equalization to media outlets," Bunye said.

But he said the President was appealing to all candidates "to take the high road of civility, prudence and decency in the campaign period."

"We would like the candidates to emphasize their programs and platforms that will improve our lives, instead of the alleged character flaws of some candidates," Bunye added.

Mother and daughter

Press Secretary Milton Alingasa said the first in the series of the President's TV ads were shot Saturday.

Alingasa said the commercial, to be aired starting this weekend, features Mr. Macapagal and her only daughter Lei engaged in an intimate talk.

"The President is telling her daughter about her hopes and aspirations, her goals, and her determination to carry on and to bring those goals to fruition," he said.

Bunye said he saw nothing wrong in the barring of GMA7 commercials as the candidates can afford it and they comply with the time limit set on TV ads by the Commission on Elections.

Side by side

Poe's 30-second, side-by-side ads, "Pelikula" and "Basketball," will likewise make their TV debut today. Both were produced by the actor's sister FW Productions and the TAPE Exponent of his campaign spokesperson, Bob Ricardo Rufo III.

Poe also appears in Legarda's commercial, "Mar Roxas Umupo," to be shown starting Feb. 13 with the theme song performed by Mike Villegas, a winner of the Metropop competition.

"Basketball" is about the value of unity and teamwork, and "Pelikula," about giving the people respite from politics and the crises brought about by economic difficulties.

"Mar Roxas Umupo" shows Poe and Legarda visiting children and their parents that a brighter future lies ahead if the children are honest and their parents hard-working.

"I'm happy with the concept because it's not like most of the political advertisements that you see," Urbano said.

Patience

The Inquirer was invited to the Saturday taping of "Mar Roxas Umupo" at the Parks and Wildlife Center in Quezon City.

Justifying the five takes in Scene 13, Urbano said in Filipino: "Old is fond of children. He is very sweet with them."

Scene 13 shows Poe sitting in a garden with children strolling around him. For the script, a 3-year-old blows hair gleefully after saying, "Here is my ego crush, sama sama, walang salang sa pagpapasalamat ng bagong umupo. For our children, all together. Helping one another to bring a new morning."

Reviewing the takes, Poe noted that the child appeared self-conscious and was looking at the ice cream.

Urbano said it was expected of children not to pay attention during shooting "because they are children."

He also expressed confidence that the ads would draw the votes away from Sen. and Legarda's rivals in the May elections.

Asked if he would vote for his clients, Urbano said: "It's a job. I know my preferences. They are all friends of mine, and my conscience will make me vote for whatever I think should be voted [into office]."

Noli, Loren shelve ...

Cavite and his wife spanned 20 years, and that she also "took care" of Katherine when the young girl was growing up.

"That's the kind of friendship we have; nothing can break that," she stressed.

And to show that "something higher than politics" bound the people "we had invited to the party," Mr. Castro said he and his wife decided to have Loren as one of the godmothers "right after the run of an announced no-candidacies."

De Castro's wife, Arlene Nones, is a former vice president for external affairs of ABS-CBN.

Loss GMA

Legarda, however, did not stay long enough to share the hugs and kisses of the important guests.

Mr. Macapagal arrived at 9:45 p.m., some 30 minutes after legarda left. She was ushered to a table that was hurriedly cleared of some dishes and flowers, and smoothly served a plate of food by waiters.

She was pictured at the table by De Castro and the other principal sponsors, administrative Solicitors Jaker Aseyas, Manuel Villar, Francis Zamgalawa and Ralph Recto, Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr., Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando, and ABS-CBN top executives Eugenio Lopez III and Federico Garcia Jr.

In brief remarks, the President told the newlyweds that "love is an act of the will," and advised them to "mind God."

She left an hour later, shouting a side to the landscape Raul Espaldon earlier that in the Mercedes Benz with the plate number 1, as Bongbong came up to relax could be her running mate mission in the campaign season.

Pomp and pageantry

The 5 p.m. wedding and the 150-guest reception displayed the pomp and pageantry befitting [illegible]

A 1993 Lincoln VLZ limousine served as the bridal car. A 5-minute fireworks display lit up the sky over Tandang Sora as the newlyweds stepped out of the chapel.

The other female principal sponsors included Lea Filart, Rep. Cynthia Villar, Barangay Gen VCruz Ramirez Bocito, ABS-CBN vice president Linda Gonzalez and anchor Karina Bautista.

Edita de Venecia, who came with her husband, Speaker Jose de Venecia, served as proxy for Senator Pangilinan's sorrow wife, Senator Cayetano.

Also present were Senate President Franklin Drilon, K-1 senatorial candidate Pia Cayetano and her brother, Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano.

Around 150 tables served by TV host Boy Abunda provided the entertainment during the reception.

The wedding coverage included some of Endurion's fellow reporters in the Lopez-owned network.

First baby

The newlyweds are said to be expecting their firstborn in July.

"Kat and Dave talked about raising a family a long time ago," Eric Canoy, executive chef for the bridal's reception, told the Inquirer today after the wedding. "We're both emotionally prepared. We used to having kids around. There are many kids in Kat's house."

Cruz said he and Katherine were awaiting the completion of their new house on Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City, and would move there sometime in Makabagong Araw.

They are set to go on a honeymoon in Las Vegas late this month.

But Katherine is also expected to replace her father in front of "Magandang Gabi, Bayan" when the [illegible] begins. With reports from Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Sherrie Ann G. Cruz

LOVEBIRDS Imported from Europe are put to death in the Philippines after they passed the eight-day deadline. Thailand. [illegible]

353 imported lovebirds put to sleep, burned

From page A1

ments. So far, it hasn't showed up in the Philippines, and the government has banned poultry imports from infected countries. (See other story in The Value Id, Page 1B.)

Bernito Carbajosa, head of the airport's animal quarantine office, said 353 lovebirds imported from The Netherlands were placed in plastic bags and put to sleep using an odorless anesthetic they were burned by personnel wearing protective gloves and masks.

The birds had been in quarantine since they arrived in Manila last Wednesday on a Dutch Airways flight.

Although the birds never left the airport in the Thai capital of Bangkok, the plane was opened, so bird cargo in the aircraft had been infected, Carbajosa said.

He also said the importer had failed to secure the required permit for the birds.

"That is really the procedure. If they pass by an Asian country with bird flu cases pass the a shipment, we do not release them[,]" said Librada Tolentino, another quarantine officer.

Avian influenza has killed 10 people in Vietnam and Thailand. More than 30 million chickens have been slaughtered in Asia to stem the spread of the virus.

Alex Miranda, Interpol Secretary-General Ronald Noble said the government had banned poultry imports from the US state of Delaware after officials there confirmed a different strain of bird flu outbreak.

Thailand Secretary Cesar Purisima said there was no need to freeze imports of US poultry, saying that only those from Delaware would be banned.

Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia have suspended US poultry imports since last Jan. 16 was announced in Delaware.

"We're waiting for further reports on that, but in the meantime, I don't think there's a reason to worry because we don't actually import anything out of Delaware," Purisima said.

According to him, the bulk of the country's chicken imports from the United States come from the US West Coast and Arkansas. The country also imports chicken from Canada and Australia.

Purisima said "suspension are ongoing with regard to quarantine, entry and quarantine rules" for the entry of Philippine chicken into Japan, which is scrambling for supplies following bird flu outbreaks in Japan's agricultural regions. China and South Korea are the other two biggest poultry buyers in Asia.

"We actually have more supply of chicken than demand. In fact, one of the things that we looking at is a possible export to other countries, particularly Japan," he told reporters.

Rita Linda Bautista, president of the Philippine Association of Broiler Integrators, said she was confident that the Philippines would be able to make some order to Japan.

"For sure, we will be able to sell other poultry to Japan," Bautista told Reuters. "We have a lot of inquiries from Japan, but normal rates have not yet materialized."

Japan has already banned imports from Thailand and China after bird flu was reported in the two countries. Japan has itself reported an outbreak of bird flu, leading to the slaughter of about 33,000 chickens.

About 30 percent of the chickens that Japan gets have to be sourced elsewhere following Tokyo's ban on chicken from the United States, Japan's fourth largest supplier.

"Apart from Japan, we are also getting inquiries from Vietnam," Bautista said. "I am not sure if we will be able to sell to some other nations—maybe South Korea. We should be able to finalize some order in a couple of weeks."

The Philippines produces about 1.08 million kg of poultry meat a year, most of it to meet domestic demand.

The country exported less than 100 tons of poultry last year, with only minimal amounts sold to Japan.

Bautista said the Philippines was taking steps to minimize any impact the country have of bird flu. "In a country, we are just very lucky because if it is brought to large-scale birds, it is considering our country-wide presence."

"As far as our broiler industry is concerned, we have been implementing very tight measures. All of our facilities are closed to outsiders," she said.

A sharp drop in domestic demand for poultry meat because of the bird flu outbreaks elsewhere had left the local poultry trade with excess supply, forcing some to look for opportunity overseas, Bautista said.

She said good trades has become key local encouraged poultry producers to increase their flocks.

"Right now, we can arrive all that is produced," she said. Right now, the demand, market is pretty weak. All the cases of scientific, although it is in other countries, has already scared many of our consumers."

The group has set up a drop in domestic chicken prices. Low birds are being sold in the domestic market at about P62 per kg. Bautista said. Prices of processed chicken are also down by about 40 percent.

To further encourage chicken growers, the government will reimburse tariffs on soya and corn feeds up to 350,000 metric tons from April to May, Purisima said.

The lower priced feeds are expected to lower production costs of poultry farms and boost their output. *Reports from AP, AFP, Reuters*

Defensor ...

From page A1

Senator De Castro (who denied the report) and set up this as a deeper smear of people who have testified that they could not remember a Bulk de Castro landline," Bedrosian said in a phone interview.

Asked if he was referring to the camp of Sen. Loren Legarda, De Castro's friend and principal rival, Bedrosian said: "Making groups is against the rules. We have not done that nor are entitled.

But Bunye, Arroyo ng Ong and a standard bearer, accused the camp of the Macapagal of spread ing the rumor.

"They're the ones behind it. The net effect of that message is that there will drop dozens. Who's going to benefit from it is Sen. Gloria?" Bunye said in a phone interview, saying that people "moving around in Mindanao" were identified with Mr Macapagal's camp.

Bunye said he had no interest in the two presidents. "Besides, it's bad for my candidacy," he said.

De Castro said he would not withdraw from the vice presidential race to give way to anybody.

"No, no, no. I'm here residents ing. That would be political suicide for me. If I am going to withdraw, I should have stuck to my decision not to run," he said, recalling his earlier challenge to do nothing whether to run for vice president.

"There's no stopping my candidacy," De Castro said in a phone interview when asked if she was concerned about the Mr Macapagal's stand on the lies. Deputy in the latest survey of Social weather Stations.

De Castro said the latest shows his withdrawal was weakening to Estrada and Ramdad rather and that some radio stations there called him up about it. But he said he was also told that the rumor came from Malacañang.

"Obviously, someone was spreading it, ... someone was supporting me," he said.

Asked if he suspected Legarda-Trillanes, he said: "It's hard to in conjecture."

But Senate Majority Secretary Juliet Gabren Tan, Roco's campaign adviser, claimed the Mr Macapagal's camp was spreading the rumor in "part of a psychological warfare to create confusion in the minds of voters."

"Roco-riding down a tough cut of the question. 'We're are spiking, we're running in last, we're in a distant position now than we were in 1998,'" Tan said, referring to the 1998 presidential election in which Roco lost to actor Joseph Estrada.

Tan said "Roco remains solid, (he's) running and continuing the fight."

Waning Roco

The reports against De Castro may have been prompted by Malacañang's efforts to stop Roco out of the presidential race.

After two political analysts suggested in an Inquirer report that Mr Macapagal could box up position candidate Bernardo Pardo, if she could get Roco out of the way, Malacañang expressed openness to the idea.

Mr Macapagal's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said that nothing was impossible and that she was open to any arrangement that would ensure her continuity in office. Roco, however, strongly turned down the proposal.

Earlier, the Liberal Party, which belongs to the administration 5-4 coalition, revealed that in close Senate President Franklin Drilon, and president, Ramon Mitra Roco, Jr., had "taken steps to ensure the party's withdrawal from the presidential race in favor of Mr Macapagal.

Asked if replacing De Castro with Roco was still possible, Drilon answered: "I don't even think (the former) answer will prejudice."

"That is still very far from the discussion," he said. Defensor, an LP member, said what his position is "is not relevant now."

Asked if he would withdraw from the race in favor of Mr Macapagal, Defensor said: "I don't even think (the former) answer will prejudice."

Her said Mr Macapagal did not mention anything about Roco replacing him. He said he had a long talk with Mr Macapagal during the wedding of his daughter Katherine on Sunday.

Asked if he would support Roco's joining the President's team, he said: "That's another story."

Compensation bill may benefit Marcos

From page A1

of Representatives last week may give rise to just such a history-defying compensation.

Lawyer Joel Domingo of Claimants 1081, a group of martial law victims, said the final version of House Bill No. 4155 "signaled the Republic of all sorts of claims, including that of Marcos, his family and his cronies.

"We'll have a very funny situation if we follow that (say)," he said.

The bill that was passed Feb. 4, 1971 senator Congress adopted, estimated P8 billion out of the $864 million in Marcos' Swiss deposits forfeited in favor of the government to compensate victims of human rights violations during the Marcos regime.

It sought to indemnify victims of gross human rights violations from Jan. 1, 1969 to Feb. 25, 1986, the period between the last year of Marcos' last term in office and his ouster in the Edsa revolt.

Also in the bill was a special group Bayan, Domingo added against the bill's expansion of terrorist human rights abuses. Lawmakers had allowed evasion of "involuntary exile" during that period to cause action.

"Now (pro) Bayan (Marcos) claiming they were also a victim of human rights abuse because they were forced out and made to live in exile in the United in the aim of the Edsa revolt? In order that bill were the lawmaker use file a claim, in fact, all his cronies file also his Armed Forces 12nd of Staff Bakal who were part of the one make actions," Domingo said.

The original bill recognized only victims of torture, arbitrary detention, summary execution and involuntary disappearance during the Marcos regime.

But lawmakers later included rape, illegal takeover of business, economic crimes (or "loss"), abducting children of rebels, and sexual offenses against detainees in the list of abuses.

Domingo would have wanted the list of claimants to be limited to the 9,539 victims of torture, summary execution and involuntary disappearance who won a $1.5-billion class-suit action against Marcos in a Honolulu court.

"I wasn't so surprised if half a million people file their claims under the bill. It will take a lifetime before the proposed Board of Compensation finishes screening and verifying those claims," Domingo said.

"They opened the floodgates to fraudulent claims," he lamented.

Under the approved bill, the five-man Board of Compensation has to investigate all the applications first before it determines the amount of compensation and begins the actual distribution.

Domingo agreed with Bohol secretary general Mario Ho late-Sinclair's observations that the bill had been "mangled."

"That's far from being a perfect bill, it has been mangled," he said.

Domingo said he hoped that the counterpart Senate Bill No. 2077 would be better, and that the members of the Senate bill would be "narrowed" to the bicameral conference.

The Senate failed to pass the bill last week. Hearings said he was "not inclined" to support the bill so as sharing the brief session after the May 10 elections and before the start of the next Congress.

CPP rival says peace talks will collapse

From page A1

stand women the proper appointment as a bargaining point for her candidacy, Mr Macapagal's spokesperson said. But the agenda never became discussion from both parties," Nasol said in a mobile phone interview.

Politicking

In the House of Representatives, two legislators asked Malacañang to facilitate the peace talks with communists in order to achieve lasting peace.

Mindanao Rep. Rodolfo Biazon and Albayan party-list Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales cautioned Mr Macapagal against using the peace talks as boost her chances in the presidential election.

Rosales said there was no need to rush the peace talks in order to forge an agreement during the campaign period.

"What is the hurry? ... being open to negotiating there's with dissent from the rest, Dr. Garcia said. "It is for Roco to withdraw for Roco to slide down to be (MRA) running mate."

Her said Mr Macapagal did not mention anything about Roco replacing him. He said he had a long talk with Mr Macapagal during the wedding of his daughter Katherine on Sunday.

Asked if he would support Roco's joining the President's team, he said: "That's another story."

GMA (Mr Macapagal's ground, it's impossible—but now they will use me," Biazon said.

Mr Macapagal downplayed reports that she was trying to rush the signing of a peace agreement to boost her candidacy.

"The time frame for a peace agreement is not an impediment at the same for is to be durable and meaningful to the lives of ordinary Filipinos," the President said in a statement.

Admiral Dan Persianes thought it was feasible to sign a final peace settlement before the elections, but spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said: "Everybody's hopeful that substantial progress will be made during the days that they hold the negotiations. Let's just mention the development in Oslo. Let's pray for the negotiations."

Agrarian reform

Rosales said there were still many thorny issues in the peace talks that need to be resolved, including agrarian reform and how the two guerrilla factions in power.

She mentioned the recent decision of Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes to declare the New People's Army (NPA) as a terrorist group.

Reyes's decision to declare the NPA as a terrorist group was based on the findings of the Philippine National Police and the military.

Rosales said the hard patrol were unrelated to the domestic unrest in the countryside, saying that they originated from the Philippines.

Both the government and the NDF panels should address this case. They should make serious work, not they increased in disturbing land?" she asked.

"How can the government be serious in terms of agrarian reform when Hacienda Luisita is doing this to our farmers?"

In the case of the NDF Rosales said the group, which claimed to be the grass-root and pro-farmers, should explain the recent killing of peasants belonging to Alabayan.

Substantial reforms

Members of PMP said a final agreement could only be reached if the government agree to to pursue substantial social, political and economic reforms.

"If this were really possible there is substantial farmer land reform in the electoral platform of Gloria, 'let the platform of it—it offers substantial solutions to the problem of poverty and underlying agitation," Barrera said.

He said: "So they have done for more than a decade, the NDF and Jesus Dureza will merely to like the negotiations as a virtual to propo-

gate to exist and expose the government."

Barrera also testified at the committee hearing on the communist insurgents for "not removing from the Marxist scholars that the revolution will end in victory of the proletariat's war."

"In their instrumentalist view, the peace talks, even the parliamentary struggle, were but the same coherent for the guerrilla war as a strategy."

He professed that in some points in the peace talks, the NDF would turn hard-line and pick on any of the issues that the panels to campaign or the sectorals up on the GPP to sustain the negotiations.

"Something which the government will veto sectorals for as long as it is Justice Secretary and his subordinates who is projected in the public as a stubborn enemy of peace," the PMP leader said.

Barrera also said the government projected for peace talks is runaway items communist rebels were killed, officials said.

A rebel was killed and another captured in a clash with government troops in Bukidnon province Monday, while one gunman were killed near the town of San Luis in the Agusan region.

The 53-year communist insurgency has claimed thousands of lives. *With reports from Aellar Ludwig Amoltana and AFP*

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'Oust-Buhain' loses fire

By Trina Etarle, Contributor

THE CAMPAIGN to oust Erico Buhain from the Philippine Sports Commission seems to have lost steam.

Key backer, the pro-tem president, said he, along with some national sports associations, was satisfied with Buhain's explanation regarding the lack of funds during a meeting at the Century Park Sheraton yesterday.

"Remember is that the funds are [illegible], said Iorfa, who apologized to Buhain for joining your BSA presidential rebellion and signed a petition calling for Buhain's head for "mismanaging" the PSC and his "lack of concern and support" for the NSAs.

Aside from Iorfa, those who signed the petition were Ike Valbuena (taekwondo), Robert Gomez (boxing), Chito Bagtas (swimming), Claudio Alfonso (cycling), Noel Bustamante (gymnastics), Benjie Bautista (rowing), Lauzon Luis Enriquez (sailing) and Dr. Jose Cui Tai (cueing).

Buhain stressed that the PSC is being hounded by members' constituents during the meeting attended by some 22 NSA heads or their representatives.

"Shipping may problema tayo (We really have a problem). You may not like me. However, my honorable duty as [illegible] ratings any party if there's not enough money," said Buhain.

The PSC has released about P95 million, or 80 percent of its total budget of P118 million. These included funds for the allowances of athletes but not the wages of foreign coaches hired by the PSC for the different NSAs.

Buhain presented the records of financial assistance given to the sports associations to refute the claims by the disgruntled NSAs that the PSC has not been transparent in giving financial support to the NSAs and the athletes.

"If there's a question or relief we're doing, the COA (Commission on Audit) will tell us. With regard to the training of athletes for the 2005 SEA Games, hindi kami yan (it's not our responsibility)," Buhain added.

The PSC's share from the national budget goes to running the agency and the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

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DP A/T	199,500.00	199,500.00	42,578	21,289	14,193	10,645	8,516	7,098
DLX A/T	167,100.00	167,100.00	35,682	17,841	11,894	8,920	7,136	5,947
DLX M/T	157,500.00	157,500.00	33,625	16,813	11,209	8,407	6,725	5,604
SR M/T	199,500.00	199,500.00	42,578	21,289	14,193	10,645	8,516	7,098
SR 4X4 M/T	241,500.00	241,500.00	51,550	25,775	17,183	12,887	10,310	8,592
RAV4 4X2 (PETROL)	199,500.00	199,500.00	42,578	21,289	14,193	10,645	8,516	7,098
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TOYOTA

TAKING THE INITIATIVE: PBA chair Bonbon Encarnado (left) and vice chair Alberto Modesto pose with Justice Secretary Hilario Davide IV. Yesterday last week in an effort to establish a smooth working relationship between the privileges and the Department of Justice. PBA delegates playing in the PBA are required to obtain affirmation of citizenship from the department.

PBA going to Tubod this May

By Jose Navarro

ALMOST 18 months removed, the Philippine Basketball Association has agreed to hold a game in Tubod, Lanao del Norte for the first time in its 30-year history.

This developed as Lanao del Norte Governor Imelda Dimaporo yesterday guaranteed the league's safety if the PBA is to go on to a region known for its share of rebel insurgencies in the past.

The 2003 Fiesta Conference was staged in the same Tubod town last year but less than three President Macapagal-Arroyo or opposing guns.

"We will deploy hundreds of Marines in the area to ensure the security of the entire PBA entourage and the fans who will troop to watch the game," PBA media liaison chief Willie Marcial quoted Dimaporo as saying.

The PBA plans to schedule its Metropolitan to Tubod in May should the Dimaporos meet the league's criteria in organizing and hosting one-of-a-kind games.

But Tordesillas and Barrios are bidding for city-some PBA time, Marcial added.

"If Tubod fails to meet the criteria in time for the target date, we still meet their hosting in October when the league embarks the new calendar and Format," Marcial told the Tordesillas.

The PBA game in Tubod will be played in the state-of-the-art Mindanao Civic Center, a venue approved by the International Basketball Federation (Fiba), the world governing body in the sport.

Dimaporo, has also committed transportation, hotel and billeting for the entourage, aside from marketing packages which seek to boost the image of the PBA franchises in the region.

If Tubod makes it, the PBA will have nine out-of-town games for the Fiesta Conference scheduled as of media, 22.

Governor Dimaporo will host the first out-of-town game this year on March 4, followed by Bacoor, Dasmariñas, Cebu, Laoma, Tuguegarao, Puerto Princesa and Dipolog City.

Other cities in the Visayas and Mindanao appearing on host games would be announced later in September when the PBA begins its new season.

TURNOVER Talk 'N Text coach Bill Bayno (right), with the shots for the Blue Eagles during a home workout session days

Foreign help for Eagles

Foreign stint for Archers

By Dennis U. Erasa

IN A NO-NONSENSE bid to gain the upperhand over its rivals, Ateneo has realized that services of former Talk 'N Text mentor Bill Bayno to shore up its title aspirations in this year's UAAP basketball wars.

But he fully isn't the behind. The Archers, champion four 1998-2003, are picking first rebuild the top of the roster by basketball with training services.

"Le bills is planning to either take the former type of training or compete in a tournament in the US," said a top official.

Bayno failed in to title ambition last last year, succumbing to the vast superiority of Far Eastern University-Institute's juniors is expected to sharpen the skills of the Eagles, who will join the rebel tournament in the US.

Bayno attended the Eagles practice yesterday in the Loyola gym.

Still around to power the Eagles to the prestigious crown are Larry Fonacier, Eli Tinsley, Jason Ibañez, Chris Tiu and Magnum Dionisio.

After finishing a respectable third despite a rookie-laden roster last season, the Tell-Send mentor are determined to take a run conference from of absence in the fifth to preserve their championship.

The engineer Mark Caidic, last year's rookie of the year, Joseph Cuan, ballboying Antonio Goco and Mark Ibanez will lead the Archers' attack in the 67th UAAP season.

NGAP left with few RP Open alternatives

By Joey Acuña

UNLESS it settles for what it feels is a sub-standard course at Mimosa, the National Golf Association of the Philippines may be forced to choose from only two options left for a venue to stage the 2004 Philippine Open golf championship on Feb. 26-29.

This developed as the final inspection of the competition course by its tournament committee chaired by Ernesto Echauz of the organizing committee that Mimosa is unfit to host the $150,000 (about P8.4-million) RP Open.

The fate of the tournament at Mimosa was the subject of a meeting between NGAP head Raul Fernandez and Clark Development Corp. management executive Gualberto Lantayan yesterday.

But the lessons learned from a reliable source that, even before the meeting, CDC president Jr. Emmanuel Angeles had already decided against Mimosa's hosting of the Open because the golf event always wipes the red.

The source said Angeles was unhappy because of the series of negative remarks the course at Mimosa by NGAP officials.

Angeles was invited to attend today's PBA forum at the Holiday Inn Manila Pavilion to clear this out regarding the Open issue.

"We've still confident they (Mimosa) won't back out," World amateur Raul Fernandez told the boosters.

In the event Mimosa backs out, the NGAP may have to choose between Bonave and Tagaytay Midlands.

Bonave president Commodore Ginny Reyes has already instructed general manager Buddy Bonaventure to prepare the course in anticipation of a sudden transfer.

RP-Lhuillier 'Tryouts ng Bayan' starts

By Ray Lucero

CAGAYAN DE ORO City—There were no street dancers, but coaches Dong Vergara and Boyet Fortuna were satisfied with the start of the RP-Cebuana Lhuillier "Tryouts ng Bayan" yesterday at the Corpus Christi Gym here.

Key regulars showed up, with the rookies expected to surface today as more hopefuls from nearby areas were to join the tryouts, the longest and most comprehensive one to be staged here in the country.

"We're overwhelmed by the warm response of the basketball community here. This is a good start for our program," said Vergara and Fortuna, who range after two month city-hopping island-crossing tryouts they will be supervising to find their talented for the national squad.

Helping Vergara and Fortuna both multi-titled and semifinalist Aries Gatus champion coaches, conduct the tryouts conceptualized by Cebuana Lhuillier boss Inc. boss Henry Lhuillier are Benjamin Lim and Roman Olivarez Jr.

Andy Gallegos, son of Gov. Antonio Gallegos, and head of the Provincial Sports and Development Board, brought along members of the Misamis Oriental team.

Cited by many, also the local coordinator of the Philippine Sports Commission, were Julius Tarcelo, a first-footed climber and outside gunner, Jerry Adriano and Jovanie Manzano.

Allen Chi Ipinki ranked at seven. She rookies and build a true skip from 4-7 guy, also at the same venue. Unlike the tryouts which are open, the class was confined to players 22-27 years old and held as part of the Basketball Association of the Philippines' outreach program.

Ricky Calimag, Dennis Madrid, Celino Cruz and Ryan Mclennis, all members of the seven-man Philippine Team to the National Basketball Game managed by Lhuillier, helped run the free clinic.

Espiritu, Manotoc shake Mango Tee with rare sweep

MANOTOC (top) and Espiritu

ROSARIO Jenilee OF Espiritu and Tommy Manotoc did the unthinkable in the recent Mango Tee tournament at the Alabang Country Club that romped off with the tournament's two major awards.

Espiritu and Manotoc, who played as a team, climaxed both the overall title (low net) and the low gross titles, marking the first time that a pair went home with the two trophies in the 20-year history of the Mango Tee.

By sure in the field of 200 teams played in the twelve-hole tournament, who pulled off blistered aces in both departments.

They posted 70 stableford points for both days with their 136 aggregate, pushing them six ahead of the runner-up duo of Boy and Vicky Manotoc (130) to overall glory.

Their score par gross of 72-72, 144 was too hot for the field to the nearest dozen Orbie Papa and JP Bautista could only tally 125.

Espiritu and Manotoc also teamed up to jump off incubators at Black Sand. Meanwhile, a long-time national standout, is a world player while Espiritu plays to a no handicap.

Medalists Mariano Philippines Golf, Dasmariñas Village, Makati and Alfred Tanyang Cavite. I won the major open Mango Tee Philippines. The tee numbers grew accustomed of ACE, presented by Smart Communications.

Runners-up Chris Manotoc became the event's biggest prize, a Mercedes Lancer, which was raffled off to the 112 players in the field.

The bumpers, totaling 75-80, settled for the Class D prize, beating Ricky Cunlu and Ismael Pimentel in a countback.

Arnel Bautista and Ricardo Lopez Class A with their 150 aggregate, pushing them six ahead of the runner-up team of Monte Bitanga and JP Castillo.

Rainier Reyes who former topped Class B and Jimmy Bautista Jr. and Leo Castillo in Class C with 149.

Bruce Antonio 81-67=148 score by just a point over Valentino Angeles, Boy Bonilla, Ronaldo Lim tallied topped Carlos Sison and Pepe Mejared in a countback.

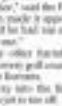
Bro. Benedict Cup set at MGC

THE DLSU Homecoming Class of '79 is hosting the inaugural alumni golf tournament, the Bro. Benedict Cup, in honor of Bro. J. Benedict FSC, at the Manila Golf Club on Feb. 27 and March 1. Proceeds from the tournament will go to the Bro. J. Benedict Scholarship Endowment Fund. For inquiries, call the DLSAA at 523-0434.

Korean invasion

SPECTATOR

M.S. Mendoza



WE say Koreans all over, the South Koreans we say that is, of course the North Koreans, not as from an client South Koreans brothers to some the north, we not say that sophisticated like the Bin Laden hunting terrorists as to totally penetrate our shores?)

But the South Koreans—why, we see them in our malls or casinos, in our theaters or restaurants and yes, in our golf courses. Time come to throngs, mind you. Their sons commerce and hotels have sprouted like mushrooms in the entire archipelago. The Korean alphabet on buildings and other edifices has become more visible than UMA billboards.

Nothing wrong there.

The world is a stage. Anybody is free to sample it. Just make sure, though, you follow the rules and you'll be all right. Welcomed with open arms and respect bestowed.

But, alas, that has not been happening in many of our golf courses unfortunately. Increasingly, the golfing Koreans have taken control. Generally speaking, they act and think as if they own what they don't actually own.

You see them clustering their tonight around in golf courses with alarming consistency. As a result, verbal gaucherie a come some sight between a Filipino golfer and a Korean golfer.

You see them acting arrogantly sometimes, with even murderous intentions. One golf course manager got himself almost killed by a Korean driving a golf cart.

"He did not even apologize", said the Filipino golf official. "He even made it appear that it was my fault. That it he had, but no sure indeed to strike him out."

If you see their not many other harmful deeds happening almost in every golf course in the land...courtesy of the Koreans.

Koreans forcing their way into the first tee even if it's not their turn yet to tee off.

Koreans hitting shots from the tee box even when there's still someone about to hit a shot on the fairway.

Koreans hitting shots over what there's still someone about to strike his putt on the green.

It's become almost commonplace that I won't be surprised if one day a Korean gets killed on the golf course, either by clubbing or stabbing.

Please clarify to them, though.

We allow them to commit an inroad of an overriding flaw.

We allow them to intimidate us with the power of their vast easy, either only refusing us to more hospitals.

We allow them to intimidate on our sovereignty, for a bit buck.

We have lost all honor and dignity in the name of money.

One day, we will wake up to see our golf courses being owned by Koreans, maybe by Koreans, with Filipinos being mere servants serving their kimchi. Worse than one being trapped in a running dog of this breed.

They have invaded the village that I live in, residing whole houses and nearly climbing here till the small hours of the morning. You see their cars everywhere.

To be sure, for the money you that I am not anti-Korean. I have friends from Korea. In fact, one dear friend of mine is a Korean. I met him in Boracay during my coverage of the Korean Open Games in 2002. Very soft-spoken, a great man as a friend, he accepted the job as golf guide for the Asian Games even though he is a member businessman. For this, he calls me every now and then just to say hello. Last December he greeted me "Merry Christmas."

What I was saying is, the Koreans aren't bad per se. If they've been bad to us in our own land and continue being so, let them bad. We are at fault because we allow them to do what they want to do to us.

It's as simple as that.

Negros Occ., Masbate XIs forge Coke title tiff

ILOILO, BAGUIO, Iloilo—Negros Occidental's Don Bosco Technical Institute and Masbate Comprehensive National High School overall overcame valorous efforts from their respective rivals early yesterday to assure a showdown for the 2003 Coca-Cola Cup Cup football title.

The Negrenses topped host Benedicto Nieves National Comprehensive High, 5-4, while Masbate clobbered Cooperative Valley's Mount National High, 9-2, both via a penalty shootout, to open the way for their 1:30 p.m. meeting today.

Iloilo and Compostela Valley will meet earlier at 9 a.m. for third place in the tourney organized by the Philippine Football Federation and sponsored by Coca-Cola Inc. and Coca.

The Negrenses and the Bonggo-hosted two 1-1 deadlock in regulation at Iloilo Wisdom Academy's Valley Stadium and at 2-2 also in regulation period.

Jim Jeff de Inglesias scored with barely a minute left to salvage the tie after Iloilo had pulled in front in the 120th minute on Ryan Hontiveros's assist.

Francis Divinos and Nemesio Palanto scored for Masbate while Khalid Iqbida and Jessie Ibañez struck for Compostela Valley.

Jose Paul Bonilla, Richard Orbino, Jonel Dacuyan, Francisco Dominic and Reuben Mongcal knocked in their penalty shots to spell the difference in Negros Occidental's victory.

Divinos, Jamel Pinones, John Francis Saclangan and Ruben Recabido converted Masbate's penalty attempts.

SPORTSWATCH

All set for 15th Ursino caddies tilt

GIFT certificates worth P15,000 each will go to the winners of the men's individual and team events while P10,000 is the top prize in the ladies' division of the 15th Ursino National Caddies Championship. The three winners will also receive the Richard Ho Chong Cup(s) in honor of the man who started the tournament in 1988 at public 72-hole shootout by Ursino and Hotel Miranda. The four-day event, scheduled to be the only one of its kind featuring caddies on a national course, ends Feb. 17 at the Valley Golf and Country Club's Executive course in Antipolo City. Chong donated the event at the Capitol Hills Golf and Country Club to provide caddies a national tournament of their own and discover talented kids there. The total prize money pool is P150,000 with all the caddies and P1 Ursino Invitational Junior Yulo-Philippines sponsored Rotary Champ Classic for the 20 teams have signed up. Registration centers are Valley Golf, Hill Golf, and National Golf Association of the Philippines (632) 7307 through Jake Ayson. Second caucus is the men's individual and team competition on the north PAL Golf Course in Antipolo. Ursino caucus set with a P1,000 entry fee (632) 7307 through Chong, Secretary of the Ursino Group of Companies, and Feb. 20, 2004 at a local church. He can be

Tagaytay hosts Ganoy-lead crown fight

MANILA: Gerry of Mandaluyong Gym captain (P) will defend his title of Double Aces for the PBL lightweight title fight this Thursday at the Tagaytay Events Center in front Batangas Dragon, Tagaytay City. The double-ring part of the Ellen Francis Television's annual Manila opening is promoted by Jun Carreon. Carreon is friends of a knockout victories KO-Philippines of Pinoy Gaston, national record holder who has signed up Bobby Pacquiao last Dec. 14 in Cebu. Another card is a pair of Jun Manalo of Gaston Boulevard Mandaluyo against Pinoy Batangas of Mandaluyo City.

YMCA Makati swim, tennis lessons set

THE YMCA Makati is offering pre-summer swimming and tennis lessons for adults. The tennis lessons are Feb. 16 with be conducted in three locations, while the tennis conversations on Feb. 17 will have four sessions. Participants can avail of lessons and get 10% on your membership card and a 10-percent discount. Basketball, another sports for children and self-defense courses for women are also lined up on April 21. Interesting sessions will be held on March 19. YMCA Makati is located at 37 Jacinto Street Plaza Street. San Antonio Village, Makati City. For inquiries, call 8896-2000, 8896-2001, 8896-2002, 8896-2003, 8896-2004.

Upstart caging league to start Feb. 18

A different and more competitive cage league is set to start on Feb. 18 when the Philippine Basketball Association Collegiate (PBAC) is scheduled to open play on Feb. 18 either at the Adamson University or Ateneo University Gymnasium gyms. Tournament organizer Ted Rogue has invited various collegiate and commercial teams for a opening act 8 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 15, either PBA Caloocan, Bonanza Plaza, Adamson gym Building, among P. Bonanza for Ted Rogue. Interested teams may contact Rogue at 0917-5-PBAC or 0917-5-722282 or 0920-5-722282 or 0920-5-722282.

Catch world's finest rally driving on AXN

UPDATE: Some earlier reported online limit issue subject to AXN's World Rally Championship (WRC) broadcasts on Feb. 15 via cable TV. Viewers can catch the highlights of the Monte Carlo Rally today at 8 p.m. The most popular spectator sport in the world with a staggering global audience of about 1 billion. The 2004 WRC features the world's top drivers and co-drivers in the World Rally Cars (WRC) in 16 rounds in 16 countries across five continents throughout season.

Three entries co-champs in NCA derby

THREE entries emerged as co-champions at the season of the first Interim Triple-Header night at the 2004 BCP 7-Crack Derby at Rio Arangkada Coliseum hosted by Sir Harris, Ganesh Bautista, Freddie Bautista and Reverend Bautista. The entries ended up with identical scores from the riders Jane de Magsaysay at the Mathematics of Brothers, Bicongsong Sabina of Harvey and Bowling Instructor, and Lucy Ann Cruz Bautista of New Mathematics by the co-chairs. Following the rule 6 racing phase with the win each team, 2-Cup of 4th Complete, Seventeen exhibition of Rabbit Rhinestone, LCC Bicongsong of Harvey and Lucky Ann, and RALEIGH Team of Ganesh Bautista and Harris, and Gardener 28 of Ronnie Perez.

33 cockers advance to Religion finals

THE CROWD CRAVING 140 Asian-sized 7-Crack Derby of Religion Bingo Global action to see what could today as participants try to rank down to the jackpot price of P5.6 million. More than 1,000 fights are in progress in the derby sponsored by Tournament Executive. After four days of elimination, 33 cockers tallied three victories each, making them automatic qualifiers to the Grand Championship on Thursday, February 12. Number of qualifiers to be reduced to 16 in a knockout final Regina Residential Derby. Bingo Global, Zambales, Bataan and Pangasinan conferences will have cockers in and will field seven cocks each on Thursday. "What is amazing is that the derby is being patronized by audiences from other areas beyond the usual cockpit centers," said Religion owner Polly Ligot, who is assisted in the derby by general manager Kenny Yu and Romeo Vasquez. The third batch of qualifiers were Rolando Abrenal, Benz Ian Pablo, Shirley del Rosario, Regie Dizon, Dr. Jaime Cayanan, Alberto Ignacio, Robert Balangue and Jeff Dizon. For inquiries, call 852-48-11, 852-4174, 851-2375 and 531-1348.

PRIZE CATCH: Pinoy's two-time LPGA tour champion Rick Abreu is welcomed to the Shell Technology by Filipinas Shell vice president for corporate affairs Rosie de Guzman (fourth from left). Shell team manager Bobby Ganapi (second from left), assistant team manager Vicky Acuesta (extreme left) and other Company officers after signing his lucrative three-and-a-half-year contract with the team recently at Shell House in Makati City.

Singh tops Pebble by 3

Fijian's amazing run moves him closer to Tiger Woods

PEBBLE BEACH, California—Vijay Singh blew away the field at Pebble Beach to continue an amazing run that keeps moving him closer to his ultimate goal—replacing Tiger Woods as No. 1.

Singh finished his best three holes Sunday to bury co-leader Ernie Els and seven others at Pebble Beach by three strokes. Obsidian and anyone else who had thoughts of catching him, closing with a 5-under 67 for a three-shot victory in the Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.

The heartbreaking Fijian lost in every time, leading by as many as four shots on the back nine and still having plenty of time to coax a bewildering series on another pristine day on the Monterey Peninsula.

Equally spectacular was his game.

Despite bumpy greens that kept Woods away, Singh managed to make 23 birdies for the week. He hit the Bay twice in the final round, and would have done it a third time, except his chip shot No. 10 was so bad it dropped in the cup.

Singh finished at 16-under 272, three shots ahead of Jeff Maggert.

Biggest comeback a four-putt for double bogey on No. 16 with birdies on his last two holes for a 69.

Phil Mickelson also had a 69 and finished third, his third top-10 in as many starts this year.

That's nothing compared with Singh, who can add $954,000 for his 16th career victory before he moves third on No. 2 in the world rankings. At this rate, it won't be long before Woods is looking over his shoulder.

"I'm playing pretty good," Singh said. "I'm more concerned with how I'm playing week in and week out. I want to be No. 1 before I finish."

ACTOR Clint Eastwood (left) looks on as Singh holds his trophy.

Wie ends up tied for 38th

ARIA, Hawaii—Michelle Wie keeps playing better in the Hawaii Pro Tours.

Wie closed with an even par 71 on Sunday to tie for 38th at 2 under 214.

Defending champion Greg Mayer, an Aquaman tour player, shot a 67 for a winning 18-under 203 total.

Last year, Wie finished at 6 over 224 and tied for 49th. In 2002, she became the first female golfer to tee first tournament against men.

Payton lifts LA Lakers; Grizzlies halt Wolves

ORLANDO, Florida—Derek Fisher stole the ball from Rod Strickland and set up Gary Payton's layup with 4.1 seconds left, sending the Los Angeles Lakers to a 91-90 victory Sunday over the Orlando Magic.

Shaquille O'Neal had 25 points, 10 rebounds and five assists for the Lakers, who rallied from an 18-point deficit to knock Orlando to its fourth straight loss.

Payton finished with 18 points, while Fisher had 13 points and three steals. Antonio Davis added 17 after entering two games with 4 rebounds today.

For Orlando, Tracy McGrady had 25 points, six rebounds and six assists in his return after a two-game absence because of back spasms.

In Minneapolis, Mame Jordan's second hot last of the game, a 14-foot jumper with 2.9 seconds remaining, helped Memphis end Minnesota's 14-game home-winning streak, 99-98.

Mark Madsen missed an open layup at the buzzer, allowing the Grizzlies to hang on for their franchise-record 23th win and 30 games into the season.

Mike Conley had 24 points and 11 assists for Minnesota, including two three-point shots with 13.9 seconds remaining, to give the Timberwolves a 98-97 lead. Carroll rallies missed a three-on-a-round for seconds of 7-1 in a row.

In Indianapolis, Jermaine O'Neal scored 22 points and Reggie Miller had 13, after 3-point-ers, to help Indiana beat Cleveland, 97-91. AP

Complete results: LA Lakers 91, Orlando 90; Golden St. Miami 111, Memphis 98; Minnesota 99, Portland 98; Seattle 98, San Antonio 93; Los Angeles Clippers 113, Denver 92; New Jersey 96, Philadelphia 85; Toronto 84, Golden State 83 (OT).

O'NEAL shoots over Orlando's Drew Gooden as Payton looks on.

Espiritu 9th among Asians after Stage 3

SAPA, Malaysia—Mauricio Victor Espiritu became the leading Filipino rider after Stage 2 of the 9th Tour de Langkawi Sunday even as the Philippines remained fourth in the Asian team classification.

The 1996 Shadow Tour champion, who once rode to marathon in the road race in the last Southeast Asian Games, clocked 3 cut with a big group in the peloton. Peter Hill climbed and finished one minute and 30 seconds behind stage winner Rolf Gorschwitz.

Espiritu is now showing moment him to ninth overall in the Asian category, seven minutes and 40 seconds behind leader Ghazi of Malaysia of Iran.

Rhon Tongaliy finished in 19 seconds behind Espiritu and, after eight minutes, came Albert Pamaos, Albert Cabalza and Ronald Gonzales, who are tied with identical positions.

Lloyd Reynante, who started the day in eighth place among teams, all had crawled to the finish.

"Nagagod ako sa team kahapon (I was dead-tired after yesterday)," Reynante said.

The Filipinos, competing under the Pagcor banner, trailed pacesetting Japan in the team race by 13 minutes and 26 seconds.

Iran moved second followed by China.

Fernley Gonzales of Colombia showed the way in the overall race followed by teammate Marlon Perez.

Peter Hill proved to be a monkey to many. But Espiritu's familiarity with the place served him in good stead as he finish in the finish in a huge finish.

"Akala ko na kay yung una sa sa. Medyo lamiga ang pahalo. (The finishes with the peloton was only really last 40 meters)," said Espiritu.

Roddick takes charge as US Cuppers sweep Austrian foes

UNCASVILLE, Connecticut—Opening and closing with record-tying 264 daft aces, Andy Roddick beat Jurgen Melzer, 6-4, 6-2, Saturday to help the United States sweep up a 5-0 sweep of Austria in the first round of the Davis Cup.

Bobby Ginepri defeated Stefan Koubek, 7-5, 6-3, in the last match of a World Group tie also held on Saturday.

Ginepri and Roddick won singles matches Friday when US Open champion Roddick broke the service speed mark at 259 kph he closed with long Roundtrip. Jesse Holt and Mike Bryan beat Julian Knowle and Jurgen Melzer in doubles Saturday.

"It was a outstanding performance by us. That gives me a lot of confidence," US captain Patrick McEnroe said. "It is going to get tougher from here, but I am pretty pleased."

In April's quarterfinals, the United States will host Sweden, which knocked off defending champion Australia, 4-1. The other quarterfinals are: Belarus vs. Argentina, Switzerland vs. France, and Netherlands vs. Spain.

McEnroe has said he thinks his current crop of players is good enough to end his country's Davis Cup struggles. The last American title came in 1995.

"We have to get to that top tier this time around and become permanent members," Roddick said. "It was late Pete Sampras, Andre Agassi, Jim Courier, Michael Chang and Todd Martin. It's not like we have a pretty young core of guys, who are very willing and very eager to play. So I only see our team getting better as the years go on."

RODDICK winds up to hit his first serve against Philipp

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BUSINESS

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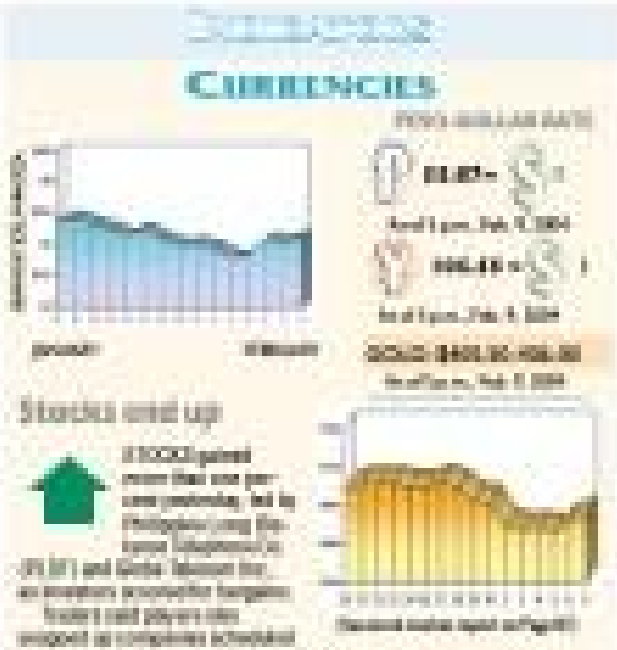
BSP fines 3 banks for forex violation



By Cielnes S. Reyes

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has fined three banks for violations of currency regulations and several lenders are under tight watch for irregular foreign exchange transactions starting last month.

The central bank is continuously examining the banks' account transactions to ensure that lenders are observing the BSP's numerous regulations on foreign exchange. Monitoring has become more intense every time the peso experiences pressure against the dollar.

Only a few days ago, the BSP had been closely watching banks' dollar transactions as rumors that some institutions were not participating in the peso's drop as a record low of 56.30 vs $1 last Feb.3. Monetary authorities reacted and as soon the peso continued its drop.

Rita Linsangan, director of supervision monitoring, noted weaker, and a possible overnight loss because the peso recovered on 55.47 vs a dollar yesterday from 56.00 last Friday. More regional currencies also firmed up.

Traders said the dollar was generally weak yesterday while the Asian markets digested warnings from the BSP of rules monitoring and a potential rise because if the peso weakness persisted. But the monetary was only temporary according to traders, and by the end of the month, the peso could fall down to the 56.20-.65 level.

JP Morgan Chase, ING Bank, and International Exchange Bank were penalized for violations of the the central bank's regulations on manner in trading, banking and reporting.

Based on official documents, ING Bank was slapped by biggest penalty at P2.45 million followed by Bank with P800,000 and JP Morgan Chase with P50,000. Bank and Bank weight penalties in the penalties in P150,000 and P100,000.

JP Morgan was penalized for selling foreign exchange to customers without registering of customers in profile. Last year, the foreign bank was fined P1.4 million for more than 50 violations committed by Financial Marketing Services Corp., its defunct money changing affiliate.

Of the five questioned transactions of JP Morgan between March and April 2003, the BSP found 3 cases in June violated Circular 1389, which prohibits banks from selling dollars to residents for cash to non-residents.

JP Morgan Chase, in a letter to the BSP, justified that the foreign exchange transactions in question were taken "based entered in rules, transactions in foreign investment."

ING Bank, the central bank questioned why the foreign dealer had not transferred $1.2 million in previous years from its head-recovery extended budget as a subsidiary operation. As a result, the bank recorded the $1 million overcharge been imposed by the regulator.

BSP insight, a breakdowns of the P1.00 million penalty to P100,000. The bank said that the transfer of the previous years' positive was delayed because it was not able to readily secure a BSP approval to move the profits. The bank also said that such a transfer would produce to court before the Court of Tax Appeals.

ING questioned a government decision to subject the foreign currency deposit rule as a breach specific settlement law which is argued that this should be exempt from taxes.

Banks was slapped a penalty of

Filipinos are world's top gin drinkers

By Abigail L. Ho

FILIPINOS gin drinkers completed their brand loyalty by Miguel as the top positions to emerge of global gin sales at 27 a million cases in 2003, edging out other popular brands of Bacardi and Tanduay.

American alcoholic beverage research firm Impact Databank said in its December 2003 report that Ginebra remained the top gin brand in the world, fueled by strong overall gin consumption by Filipinos that year.

Local gin drinkers downed 27.03 million cases of gin in 2003, even more than the 26.06 million cases they drank the previous year.

They outpaced their American counterparts by more than 140 percent, who consumed 11.03 million cases of gin during the same period.

Spanish drinkers were a far third in terms of consumption at 7.59 million cases, followed by the United Kingdom's 6 million cases and DOMESTIC 5.68 million cases.

As far as sales gin brands were concerned, Ginebra topped the gain's London's, which sold 5.2 million cases and Tanqueray at 3 million.

The local gin brand likewise exceeded Bacardi Rakardi, Bacardi's at 3.2 million cases, as well as other Bacardi Spain & Pilar's Bombayer at 2.5 million cases.

It also edged out other world-renowned gin brands including Beefeat Richard's Cairns, Bacardi Ltd.'s Bombay Sapphire Gilbey's, McDowell & Co. Ltd.'s Blue Riband, and Allied's Hills Distillers Inc.'s Ballantine's.

Ginebra San Miguel Inc. (GSMI), which produced the Ginebra brand under the San Miguel Corp. subsidiary, registered a 4-percent increase in net sales and consolidated sales volume in 2003. Sales stood at P12 billion.

Exports surged 88% percent to 667,000 cases in 2003 from 355,000 cases the year before. Export volume growth was particularly pronounced in the second half of the year.

Brewers Despite a surge in international demand and a steady growth in local gin consumption, GSMI posted a slight decline in net income as a first time than P1.65 billion in 2003 due to "difficult business conditions due to [local] elections [and] poor sales in the last three quarters," a company disclosure stated.

Caught in the hack

TODAY, as the fried peso shake down the rough road of the financial markets, let us take a look at the untold benefits of currency speculation...i.e. exchange rate gambling.

The Bangko Sentral, for one, is threatening to suspend any branch of any bank which, for some remote chance, is even accidentally caught doing ... well, the "sale".

In handing the "sale" brings about the same result as the misdeed's personal insurance in general is, something suddenly hurts between your legs.

...

ANYWAY, it is also called the "sale" in banking, because you basically sell dollar to your customer, or you split up with somebody else, to let the public where it badly the most.

The banks split the dollars between the actual buyer and themselves. The banks pretend that they sell dollars to the public, but they actually keep some for themselves.

The president is also against Bangko Sentral rules. For the sake of a couple of candidates for Vice President, he simply means that the banks are cheating.

While the SEC only involves small amounts, it is said to be a common practice today practice in banking at the branch level.

And as each transaction of $5,000, from $5,000 times, ad only amounts to ... let's see ... well, that's really a lot of money!

...

Hold's why the Bangko Sentral thinks it is one big reason for the massacre of the peso in the one way transfers. In effect, investors made artificial demand for dollars.

In banking parlance, it is not sind-out money laundering. Some have in my parking (alleged) foreigners, it is just pure and simple high-stakes gambling.

Unfortunately, it is not that easy to catch the "sale" practitioners in the act. How many branches do they have all over the archipelago? 7,100 islands again?

...

METHINKS the Bangko Sentral has better things to do than act its personnel to watch all of those thousands of branches for night banking hours, five days a week.

Then, the central bank is going to catch just a few. If your branch happens to be one of those, tough luck, Boy Bilib, because you are unexpected for easy arrest.

By the side of a certain presidential candidate, the "sale-ops" in the pharmaceutical industry have a colorful term for it—"simple sale."

It is not just an empty threat from the Bangko Sentral. Straight from the horse's mouth, I heard that the authorities planned to make an "example" out of some banks soon.

And as if the banks were to take the risk and still gamble on the exchange rate, it's up to them. But they better make sure they are not caught in the dollar backing.

...

HOW, some saved persons in business circles, that, actually, some still participated in either "El cajondo" were behind the recent Supreme Court ruling against the Comelec.

In effect, the ruling stopped the Comelec from using computers to count the votes in the next elections, by nullifying its supply contract with the Hiligaynon Memorial.

Maybe it's because there is a so-called "expert" some are doing earlier their own businesses.

The business principals of one of them, I heard, and even the Hutchisons of his business, even threatened to the court room against him.

...

THERE are the pros, in other words, if the issues are to be balanced, on which the Supreme Court relied heavily to make its decision.

The ruling indicated, in an unwritten terms, that the Comelec did not know what it was doing in the computerization project.

But in I said, a number of those behind the court room said to be in big trouble. Business calls are stopped mid-air.

And so who would they spend time and resources on is one before the Supreme Court or, if it was only seven misdemeanors, plus palpable duty, which behooves them to move business and must be just to stop the Comelec project?

Methinks it was all about the money. And for a change money, how can anybody trust them to use the honest truth about the project?

Even the computer experts from the academe (those from UP), who are the real ones, said not the process, think that the Supreme Court got a lot of garbage from those behind the recount.

...

TODAY the top executives of the global corporate Intercontinental Hotels Group are completing a survey route in the Philippines. It is the latest of the company's 18 corridor routes worldwide. As to why they chose the Philippines, I must try to find out later this afternoon. For sure, it is something good about this country. The group happens to manage a number of hotel chains, such as the Intercontinental brand, Holiday Inn, Staybridge Suites, Crowne Plaza Hotel, and Candlewood Suites. The survey teams will take care of the needs of customers around the world. There'll be consulting after 200 stations, manned by about 500 highly trained personnel. I like the group already.

BREAKTIME

Commodore R. Bonoan III

NEW FARE SCHEME

LRT ridership hits 110M

By Abigail L. Ho

THE LIGHT Rail Transit Authority yesterday reported a passenger volume of 109.58 million passengers for its Line 1 and Line 2 railway systems in 2003.

Line 1, or the Yellow Line, generated a total ridership of 107.24 million passengers in 2003, slightly higher than the 107 million commuters it created the year before.

Line 2, or the Purple Line, chipped in another 2.2 million passengers in the same period.

The 15-kilometer Yellow Line runs from Baclaran in Parañaque to Monumento in Caloocan.

The Purple Line, a 13.8-km system spanning from Recto in Pasig to Santa in Marikina, has been running since April 2003. Both were only the four-station Cubao stretch is operational. The whole line will be fully operational by the end of the year.

Despite the implementation of a new fare structure on Dec. 15, the LRTA said in a statement yesterday that ridership did not drop, particularly on the Monumento-Baclaran line where the new fare scheme was enforced.

The distance-based fare scheme scrapped the single-fare system that had been in place since the start of the Yellow Line's operations in 1984.

Under the new fare scheme, commuters pay a minimum fare of P12 and a maximum fare of P15, while the 19-year-old line originally which had a flat rate of P8.5 for the whole line.

For the first four stations, a passenger will be charged P12. Passengers using the single journey or one-ride-only cards will have to pay P13.5 in all succeeding stations after the first four, while those using stored value cards will have have their go up by P1 increments after every five stations.

If an LRT 1 passenger, for example, goes on the train at the Monumento station in Caloocan and gets off at Blumentritt station, or four stations after, he pays P12. If, however, he decides to get off at Tayuman station in Binondo, or five stations after, he then has to pay P13.

No turnover using a single-journey card, getting on at the Monumento station and alighting at the Tayuman station will mean a P15 fare.

The new fare scheme likewise eliminates the P2 fare for passengers who get on the train at any of the last four stations at either end of the line stations in Baclaran line.

LRTA planning manager Evangelina Rances said it is another initiative that the new fare scheme was designed to allow the railway system to become more stable as well as give it additional cash to finance its operational as well as debt-servicing requirements.

She said the new rationalization scheme would take in an additional P1.15 million per year for the LRTA.

Meralco gets authority to float bonds

By Roneel M. Domingo

THE ENERGY Regulatory Commission has given Manila Electric Co. the provisional authority to issue bonds worth up to P600 million to secure outstanding payments on unsecured loans.

In a seven-page decision docketed last Jan. 12, the ERC said it found it unavoidable to allow Meralco "to have the flexibility to enter additional loans to cover its financial burden."

The five-member commission was not of that the utility had not been able to comply with financial ratios required by some of its creditors.

Banco de Oro (BDO), Bank of the Philippine Islands and UBCI-Singapore require Meralco to maintain a current ratio of 1:1, but the actual ratio is 0.72:1.

BDO and BPI require the company to maintain a fixed charge of 1:1, but the actual figure is 0.98:1, and the Asian Development Bank requires an 8-percent return on fixed assets, when the actual rate is 6-percent.

In its decision, the regulator said Meralco had filed a petition last Sept. 5 asking for authority to issue up to P600 million that it would use to refund capital projects that would be implemented from 2000 to 2003, refinance all of its existing long-term unsecured debt, and convert existing unsecured debts to long-term secured debts.

Meralco said the amount would cover a total of P399 million in outstanding loan payments and P598 million more that it is allowed to borrow under an authority issued by the then Energy Regulatory Board in 2003.

During a hearing on Meralco's petition yesterday morning, Reinerio Reformina (Mandaue) president Jose Regin asked the ERC to withdraw the provisional authority.

In a statement issued after the hearing, Regin said: "We should first see Meralco's finalized studies on capital expenditures and expansion projects."

Meralco representatives asked the commission to suspend the hearings and give it one month to submit the documents in question.

"Why does it have to take one month?" if Meralco really made such studies, it only takes to have them photocopied," Regin said.

Last month, chief base coalition granted Meralco a third extension of debt totaling $84 million.

Late in January, Meralco treasurer Robert Indiongko said the company expected to incur a deficit of P24 million in the first quarter if it failed to refinance outstanding long-term debt payments.

Meralco needs to service a total of P11 billion in long-term debt payments within the year.

It would be a pity if you didn't look at the Lange 1 movement with a magnifying glass.

But you certainly don't need one to read its patented outsize date.

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The Central Bank strikes back

I HERE just returned from Arlene where the Bluejays will be held to a few months. There is no rape hunt, but the rifle tub refused to let me enter the Zoo edition, which consists of 15 pending events. They said I could not throw the Bunnies because I was an insurance, so for throwing the discs, they refused to discard it. I did not fancy competing against 14-year olds on the parallel bars and the marksmanship was long.

So I entered the 200 metre hurdles, but unfortunately I tripped over the first one and burned 20 minutes behind. The rest of the team asked, "Where has Dan old trained man?" Still, I rounded myself up before saying that never again will I have to run the hurdles. I had a meeting. He was very accommodating and used to work for Hoarhaven Airlines whose motto is "For the friendly flights."

I am very worried about what are finally should see. Obviously, cinchers is not in 10 people have died of Pacific Ring in a 9-ball match between Elton Beyer and Earl Strickland. He always called "Bud" and all the spectators was for their love. Bud is out because of tend cow disease. They were have a mad cow on the no-regular portions of arrogant's horse.

We said it was not a game for a virologist to someone who takes Viagra. Round noses of bud flu in the nasal passages of pigs, and he were hurt. It sounds undoubtable but pigs are 90 percent identical with humans genetically. They even have piggy fronts.

As for rabies, bird flu can use fish and veg-etables, but there is still a problem. Fish, especially at and fish, contains mercury, which in sufficient quantity is very poisonous. So you must either take the fish into a woodwork shop and put it into a lathe, or go to a garage and use a petrol pump. I don't have this problem. My wife does it.

As for the vegetables, the farmers spay them only yesterday, so I take them with me every night for my bathtub, together with my rubber duck. I play with them for an hour, then put them in the morning. In the end, after about 3 weeks, they emerge as giant organically grown vegetables, but the farmer usually gets shredded and ending up unbroken. One day I hope to interest my rubber duck and have offspring get hooked up.

My friend bought a CD of the Lion King in Hungarian. He has the front, in which Simba has sat in the back it reads "En lyic king." He does not know whether it is a pirated copy or

MR. BEARBULL

Alan Nadhem

political correspondent

LAST week, I wrote that there would be a rally within a week. I know this is not a certainty because the degree of risk had fallen from 1:01, at the peak of the market, to only 4. And it had remained at that level for 2 days. For those chambers that follow candlesticks, there was a morning top is due to be almost a doji. Either way it indicated indecision on the part of investors as to what the market was going to do next, and as it occurred after a steep correction, it indicated that the technicals might be about to turn.

The next day, the Pisces were not eligible, confirming the turn around, and the momentum had risen to 81. I went on ABBT1 spread on Tuesday of TEL, then PGD. So degree of risk was only 2 but could hardly go any lower. On Wednesday, the price fast not moved significantly, but momentum had risen to 91, a figure equal that it was about to reverse. On Wednesday night, the Reverse & Departures, which is totally separate from me, sent out a BUY signal to all our clients. This made me even more confident because when technical and fundamental analysis concur, using different methods, it is almost always right.

On Thursday I sent out a third BUY signal as momentum had risen to 95, and on Friday, it took off, rising to PIGS, up 3Pkt on the day. Momentum on Friday was still only 20 so I expected it to rise further, and on Monday, it jumped another PIG to PIGS, up P122 on my original recommendation.

Even one concerned that Bear would be an anodyne holding on Feb. 10 instead of Feb. 26. Usually, when profits are brought forward, it indicates a weakening of the underlying bullish trend, as the Elder Stumpf in Newt. If the results were bad, they would hold it on top of to continue as POSSIBLOS. Could be at some of my peers.

On Thursday, the price had risk to an all time low of 16.22 and the central bank was expected to raise rates. This can be even because of very high volume (valued—$201 million, Deputy Governor Tetangco warned that currency traders would be carefully monitored and that action would be taken against them. In the afternoon, he raised the reserve requirements of the banks from 1.7 percent to 19 percent. This immediately took P20 billion in liquidity out of the system. To the astonishment, the peso rallied back to just below 56 and the stock market reacted positively on Friday, rising 30 points. This is the second time he has reversed expansionary to a pro-cyclical. One wonders that TEL had SELL fore on Friday into that they have large dollar exposure, so anything that will stabilize or strengthen the peso must be good for them.

The other news was that inflation had been revised upwards to 4.1 percent. For years, inflation has been calculated on the basis that the majority of Filipinos only consume steamed rice and water, with to wash and various alcohol chocolate. I am exaggerating, of course, but the model was unrealistic. Now it takes into account price increases in gasoline, electricity and water rates. During the year, if could rise to 5 percent. One thing is certain, interest rates are going to rise and this will be bad for property companies, people and consumer goods and companies such as Jollibee.

The downgrade by Moody's last week will make it more expensive to borrow abroad as companies with large dollar exposure will also be adversely affected. If the government is determined to press ahead with the sale of $600 million to $700 million in bonds by the end of next month, they will have to pay a higher rate of interest. It goes without saying that the government will have to pay more on its road dollar and peso debt amounting to P5.3 trillion. And by 2006, the deficit will increase by P300 billion, probably more because of depreciation of the peso.

The United States announced that the unemployment rate had fallen from 5.7 percent to 5.6 percent and that 112,000 jobs had been created in January. This is less than the 140,000 that the economists were hoping for and "only" 16,000 more than the 96,000 of the last. Alan Greenspan predicted that jobs would be created as the economy picked up and it looks as if he will be correct. Wall Street responded positively to the news. Over the past year, the dollar has fallen 17 percent against the euro but the US economy relied other countries to keep their exchange rates flexible. nabeenbull@hotmail.com

SEC probes buyers of PSE shares

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission is set to look into the identities of the people who have bought shares of the Philippine Stock Exchange since the year that ended last Dec. 31.

According to SEC Chair Lilia Bautista, the move would determine whether brokers have been active bought the PSE shares. Brokers are banned from buying the shares because it would defeat the purpose of demutualization.

"We want to look into the identity of the buyers because there might be circumvention of the demutualization rules," Bautista said in a press briefing, adding that she had ordered the SEC's market regulation department to begin its investigation on the matter.

Last Dec. 15, the PSE began trading its own shares, which are owned by the exchange's 164 broker members. The long-overdue listing of the PSE shares came after the SEC threatened to sing a P1-million fine on the exchange for refusing to go public as mandated by law.

The demutualization of the PSE is intended to remove the ownership of the exchange to big and local investors aside from the brokers.

Under the rules on demutualization, members-brokers are now limited to owning a maximum of 25 percent of the exchange. Also, no individual is limited to own a maximum 5-percent ownership. The rule on common brokerage should not own more than 20 percent of the exchange.

Aside from making the 4.2 million common shares of the PSE, the exchange is also planning to sell some of its shares through a private placement. The plan to sell through a private placement was proposed after the PSE shares were initially very thinly traded since their listing.

According to a source report from the SEC, only 68,900 shares of the PSE had been traded last Dec. 31 to Jan. 15.

The PSE board has tapped the services of 4th Ilan King Capital Partners Inc. to sell the PSE shares through private placement. Selling through private placement is intended to help dilute the PSE shares.

Earlier, the PSE board mandated the members-brokers to sell the exchange's shares at P139.50 each. The selling of the shares is expected to generate P730 million for the PSE.

PLDT taps growing on-line gaming sector

By Abigail L. Ho

BOOSTS leader Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. has forged a partnership with local online game publisher Level Up! to take advantage of the popularity of online gaming in the country today.

Under the deal, Level Up! will provide a dedicated server farm composed of more than 200 personal computers to handle Level Up!'s hosted versions of the popular online game, Ragnarok.

A server farm is a collection of servers that act in central architecture to a large network of computers.

Worldwide, Ragnarok has already amassed around three million subscribers, some 80,000 of which are based in the Philippines.

Revenues for the local online gaming market now fall within a range of P300 million to P500 million, and is seen to grow even further, as more people go online using popularity in the country.

Online games are definitely creating a big wave here in the Philippines. This partnership is double significant because it contributes to the development of the local gaming industry and allows PLDT to develop additional and products that would cater to the content needs of a growing gaming market," said Napoleon Nazareno president and business development head Abel Nolte said in a statement yesterday.

The partnership also included collection of Level Up!'s entire catalogue of games, and their forthcoming online game, Dr. Model. This would be housed in a PLDT Telehousing facility, said PLDT senior vice president and corporate business group head Ernesto Alberto.

The Level Up! server farm also have more than 40,000 online gamers to log on simultaneously.

On a typical Saturday, Level Up! general manager Ben Cobarrubias said the number of Ragnarok players would peak to as high as 34,000 players simultaneously.

Days after their launches on the other hand, usually had 20,000 to 25,000 players simultaneously logged on to Ragnarok. Having the current hosted facility would allow Level Up! to make access to the same even easier and more affordable, he added.

Ragnarok is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) that takes place in a fantasy world called Midgard. In this world, humans, demons, magic spells and gods rule.

Because of its massively multiplayer nature, it can accommodate thousands of players online all at the same time.

While making access easier and more affordable for gamers, PLDT said that new gaming could become a new revenue stream for PLDT.

DISCLOSURES

ISEMBAN Mining Corp. will hold a special stockholders' meeting on March 17, 10 a.m. at the 2/F of Cocoa Building, Makati City to ratify the proposed capital infusion consisting of the company to stockholder its default receivables as well as support its capital expenditures and operating expenses.

* * *

METRO Alliance Holdings and Equities Corp. invested $10 million in Polytrade Worldwide Ltd., giving it a controlling interest.

* * *

A. SORIANO Corp. a 3.66 million-share interest bought by its wholly-owned subsidiary Anscor Consolidated Corp.

* * *

ELECTED directors of **Philippine Telecom Plan Cutting and Reducing Corp.** were Alexis Andrada, Oscar Rillera, Isabel Berenguel, Consolacion Jimenez-Rivera, Jose Leandro L. Rivera Jr., Bienvenido Tan Jr. and Bienvenido Tan III. Also, the company declared a cash dividend of P0.03 per share in favor of stockholders of record as of March 8 and will be payable not later than April 16.

* * *

JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. disclosed that its wholly owned subsidiary, Jollibee International BV entered into an agreement for the purchase with 49 percent of Smeed Enterprises Ventures Ltd. which is the holding company of Shanghai-based Tangbo Group of Companies. The purchase will enable Jollibee to own and operate 77 stores of Tangbo King in China.

Consolidated by Mercedes B. Tabuso PSE Research

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The most interesting people and personalities know their news in the pages of the Sunday Inquirer Magazine

INQUIRER

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Power sector needs ₱633B to meet increasing demand

By Rowena W. Dayrings

GOVERNMENT estimates under the Power Development Plan 2004-2013 (PDP) show that P633.6 billion will be needed to put up additional power plant capacity and complementary transmission facilities to meet the growing electricity demand in the country in the next 10 years.

Of the amount, P462.1 billion would be committed by additional power generating capacity, while P171.6 billion would be spent for transmission line and substation projects.

The PDP, which was launched last week, identified projects awarded to enable the energy sector to meet the expected demand, estimated based on assumption that the economy would grow by 6.7 percent between 2004 and 2013. Over the same period, the country's population is seen to grow by 1.8 percent yearly.

Energy officials say the two to six-year lead time in delivering additional power projects is necessary to meet the growing demand in the country's economy.

The seven that the country's peak demand, the highest level of electricity requirement in a day, may reach 9,104 megawatts within the next three to seven (3,004 MW).

With demand is seen to further go up to 17,241 MW by 2013.

Government data show that the country presently has a total installed capacity of 15,132 MW, but only 11,262 MW of which is considered dependable.

PDP projections indicate that 7,749 MW in additional capacity will have to be operational within a decade.

Of the total figure, 3,770 MW or 73 percent is needed in Luzon, 1,220 MW or 23 percent is needed in the Visayas, and 990 MW or 19 percent is needed in Mindanao.

Energy officials said that without the additional capacity, power shortages would be felt in Mindanao by 2008 and in Luzon and the Visayas by 2009.

In a related matter, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. told reporters on a briefing last week that the government was confident it could sell at least two of National Power Corp.'s power plants before the election in May.

Perez said reporters that Napocor and the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. were in the meantime, finalizing transitional supply contracts (TSCs) before the power plants and various distribution utilities.

"We are awaiting the approved TSC from the Energy Regulatory Commission. The TSCs are key for the bidders' privatization and (Energy) there's the potential big benefit before we could privatize," the official said.

Perez explained that the value of a power plant could be enhanced if it had a TSC, especially in Luzon where there is currently excessive generating capacity.

Zambales mango to conquer int'l market

IBA, Zambales—Don't get surprised if mangoes labeled with "Zambales Mango" soon invade local and overseas supermarkets.

Officials of the provincial agriculture office here are pushing for the labeling of mangoes grown in the province to properly identify and promote the local fruit's distinct qualities.

Zambales gained a global reputation for being the producer of the sweetest mango in the world, when it was featured in the 1999 Guinness Book of World Records, local officials said.

Antonio Wenday, provincial agriculturist, said the Zambales Mango Industry Development Council was finalizing the planned individual labeling of Zambales mangoes to separate them from mangoes grown and harvested from other provinces.

"Traders are usually bringing Zambales mangoes to Metro Manila and other provinces, especially during the peak season. This is the reason why we would like to have our mangoes labeled for proper identification," Wenday said.

He said individual labeling of fresh mangoes is not a common practice in the country, but putting the practice in place would prevent some traders from unduly claiming that they sell mangoes from Zambales.

Zambales mangoes are known for its sweetness, juiciness, absence of fiber in its flesh, and the lesser of pulp.

Penaloo said the ZMDC is also planning to develop post-harvest facilities and a packaging house, where sorting, grading and packaging of mangoes will be done to increase its market potentials.

The province's mango industry development plan identified Zambales as one of the leading producers of quality mangoes in the country and among the pioneers in domestic mango exhibits.

Commercial farming mangoes are found in the northern towns of the province. At least 6,000 people are engaged in mango growing in Zambales, most of them in the towns of Botolan and Iba.

Records from local agricultural office here also showed that more than 3,000 hectares in the province are devoted to mango growing. There are many varieties—carabao, pico and kalmas—the grown to at least 556,865 trees, mostly inbearing. Allan Alamares, PIA Central Luzon desk

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Ephedrine diet pills to be banned soon

WELL AND GOOD

Nina Jauco

The death of a 23-year-old professional athlete drove home the point that the products can be lethal

ON THE COUNTER sales of ephedrine-based diet pills will be banned starting March 1, according to the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA). California already banned the pills on Jan. 1 and the state of New York may soon illegal too. Nonetheless, the FDA decision makes the ban nationwide.

It's taken nine years for the last 16 years, the FDA has received reports of 155 deaths and 16,000 complaints associated with the use of the stimulant diet pills.

The most famous death was that of 23-year-old Baltimore Orioles baseball pitcher Steve Bechler in February last year. Although there was also the highly publicized death of Ines Maria Capati, who died while working out in a New York City gym a few years ago, the doctor's ruling spoke like the death of a celebrity would up a headline news.

Bechler's death drove home the point that ephedrine diet pills can be lethal. His failure resulted before the US Congress to rally and regulate or the lawmakers to study the pills illegal and "not be on sale like a toy."

Not FDA's fault

A good question to ask is why it took the FDA so long to take action. Well, it's not the FDA's fault.

A 1994 law effectively said here's the "Dietary Supplement and Health Education Act" means that makers of dietary and herbal supplements do not have to prove that their products work or are safe to be able to sell them unlike over-the-counter and prescription drugs, which have to pass a stringent process before they can be sold.

Dietary supplement manufacturers are also not required to report to the government any complaints or deaths that its diet products. The FDA had to rely on the reports of doctors and consumers, which could be only the tip of the iceberg. The FDA suspects the voluntary reports account for only one percent of what is actually happening.

It took 10 years for the FDA to gather enough evidence to convince the court to overturn the ban. Sadly, Bechler's death was probably the catalyst the FDA needed to get ephedrine diet pills banned. Supplements manufacturers can still appeal the FDA decision. If they win, the ball will be back in Congress' lap.

New requirement

Accordingly, The Nutrition Act will be soon sponsored by Sen. Richard Durbin that will require manufacturers of ephedrine diet pills to provide evidence of the product's safety before it can be sold. As is required, supplement manufacturers are not taking it sitting down. Durbin was quoted as saying, "The supplement industry is a multibillion dollar operation with an army of lobbyists. It's one of the biggest players in Washington and almost dogs crawling at the beach."

Perhaps anticipating the fallout from Bechler's death, some supplement companies voluntarily took ephedrine-based diet pills off the shelves months ago. But not for-

eign ephedrine would be available legally. Banned versus is said to be bought elsewhere like on the black market and even via Internet.

Banned pills can still be bought illegally here in the Philippines. The same the same thing will happen with ephedrine. The business will just go underground.

What you should know

Here's still will be a "happy hunting" market, here's what you need to know about ephedrine diet pills or generic equivalents.

• Other names for ephedrine are ephedra, ma huang, and Ephedra Sinensis. It is a common ingredient in "fat burners" and "energy pills."

• When ephedrine is combined with other stimulants like caffeine or guarana, it poses a increased risk of life-threatening side-effects.

• Side effects include high blood pressure, rapid and irregular heart beat, insomnia, nervousness, anxiety, tremors, sleeping problems, chest pain, dizziness, headaches, seizures, stroke and heart attack.

• Ephedrine can aggravate underlying medical conditions like hypertension or heart disease. Capati had mild hypertension, the kind of a condition that months after taking an herbal weight loss supplement that contained ephedra and caffeine.

• People do not always know the conditions of their health. For example, you can have hypertension and not know it. According to the Philippine Society of Hypertension, 13 million Filipinos have high blood pressure and half of them were not aware they had it until a complication like a stroke or heart problem occurred. That's why you shouldn't just pop any supplements into your mouth without consulting your doctor.

• Most of the people who reported side effects to the FDA were young healthy individuals before the age of 40.

• 2% percent of cases of adverse effects occurred in women. The FDA said this may because women were the main users of weight loss supplements, though it might also reflect a difference in the way a male's body metabolizes ephedrine compared to a male's.

• "And can take ephedrine for one year without problem, but that is not proof that it is safe for you. Some of the people who died had been taking the product for one year.

• Even if you take the recommended dosage, you might still be susceptible to adverse side effects. The FDA believes some individuals are more sensitive than others.

• Ephedra's effects like nausea and jitteriness were noted in people who had no family history and also in those with no predisposition or known depression and mood disorders.

(CONTINUED ON C2)

VALENTINE'S Day Wasabi Buffet Special

PRE-VALENTINE SPECIAL: Grilled Wasabi Chicken

YUM-YUM. Inagiku's Ebi Fry

Go Japanese on V-Day

CLOSE-UP Grand manager Oscar Reyes Jr., DJ Marvelen Zarte, singing sensation Sarah Geronimo, Jayeff and Amiee Hidalgo

IT'S Valentine again, pulangges. The season of love has arrived. Wasabi, like previous Japanese restaurants, has prepared a pre-Valentine dinner menu for Feb. 13, and offers a romantic treat to all you each bad lovers, pulangges.

It starts with a romantic serving of Grilled Unagi Ala Shabi Shabi Fillet with wasabi dressing, and a grain vegetables salad.

The main dish will be a choice between either Marinated Ibo Prawns or Grilled Beef Tenderloin with Red Wine sauce. Cap the night with Wasabi's signature dessert icecream. Inclusive of Wasabi's Red cocktail, the package is priced at P950++ per two persons.

And on Valentine's Day when Cupid sends his servants flying and you are ready to escape the middling crowds of malls and hotels, and looking for a delightful romantic dinner with a difference, Wasabi is offering a special Valentine buffet for Japanese food enthusiasts. For only P888++ per person, you will enjoy a generous spring of Wasabi classics, including those to-die-for rolls in rainbow, tornado, inside-out California, futomaki, soft shell crab, assorted sushi cigar, fresh salmon with fruit and many more. Main items include roasted turkey and lamb, chicken teriyaki, tempura delights, baked scallop special, seafood (teppanyaki) and Wasabi's signature dish, the seaweed, yummy Japanese Paella.

People with a sweet tooth, dabalogs, can dig into an exclusive menu of desserts, including yourmom's favorite mango cream brulee, chocolate mousse, assorted cakes and pastries, fruit tartlets, and French style crepes.

Hey, this ain't bad, huh? Interested? Well, pulangges, do call 8404222 for more details. Even free valet parking will be offered and making said non-working seating is unlikely.

Wasabi is at Glorietta Bldg., cor. Makati Ave. and Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati.

Check them out, homes. After all, that is your day.

Lovapalooza Valentine aims for Guinness world record

People shout date movies, pulangges. But it definitely the grandaddy event of the year's the eve of Valentine's. But the best event ever is in the country plus thousands of beautiful couples will gather at the now bustling romantic strip of Roxas Boulevard to break the heavens and celebrate "love —and Valentine—for free," with millions of other couples nationwide through the Lovepalooza satellite parties. Other couples will be watching the event live on television or even accessing the website at home.

Closely, in cooperation with Mayor Lito Atienza and the city of Manila, is presenting its biggest event for 2004 dubbed "Lovepalooza" destined to be as huge and as grand as the international fireworks display that gave it its name: the "Lollapalloozer" that preformed the best rock musicians in the United States for a month-last music celebration.

Top bands, acoustic masters, DJs and singing sensation Sarah Geronimo will perform on any one of the three stages that will be set up along Baywalk, with each stage presenting versatile musical flavors.

Acoustic and superstar dudes, Paolo Santos, Imel Calimagan and Pinoy Gonzaga will be on the today of performers, along with Freddie Dam, Bene Glenn and DJ Sam. Jam-out to rock the night are the Freestyle, R&B groups, such as Jacob Arnan Hidalgo, Mulit, the Residence and Newsprint. So less than the 30-piece Manila Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of Redel Calimoso, will also be participating.

Rock-the-Shore sounds will let by dancer pop, Mr. Shorts Studio, such as DJ's Bambi, Mell D.O.C. The stunner Dance Club will end it on.

But what sets this huge event apart a fire—take your breath, pulangges—5,000 couples who will, for a minimum of 10 seconds, kiss simultaneously can only to chase their love on valentine's eve, but also to break the Guinness Book of World Record held by a gathering of 4,645 couples who kissed for 10 seconds in Chile.

Closely leads Lois Hinosaro and Ala Paredes will host the one-of-a-kind event, to-gether with five couples who will lead the kissing pulangges.

"Closely is confident it can easily smite the Chilean record and even more confident that 40 5,000 couples will have their lovely breath ready to kiss for a world record," organized PR wonder woman Frances Arcon of the popular Vision and Expressions.

Closely Lovapalooza's message is loud and clear, "Celebrate love by breaking the barriers of your usual Valentine's days. Celebrate love and kiss for the record."

Wow, go for it, pulangges.

The Z makes its mark

Nestor's 3002 made its sky-soaring grand entrance in our market. The luxurious sports car was introduced in a fantastic all-star affair, would you believe, in the Le Pavillon.

Nevertheless, the brought together our country's big top lovers, like car enthusiasts, race car aficionados and devotees of the iconic Z-sports coupe, pulangges. The 3002 was not a new shift in Nissan's direction, "But will definitely were the master of the company's in-car-ose."

No less than Isshchi Ido, the Minister for Yi Pe, ambassador to the Philippines, his excellency Ian-mun Lai and is his short opening remarks, "The Nissan 3002 is a sne sports car built on the heritage of the Fairlady 240Z. It is the vehicle that changed the way people looked at Nissan. 3002 owners will be treasured athlete car at first sight, and will continue living it honored."

Needless to say, pulangges, loving the car at first sight were Manila Sports Club list members Oscar Salvacion, George Sec, Sonny Limsaeng and Sophie de los Reyes. And bringing the house to jamid fourth's 240Z owner, Mike Gimeno.

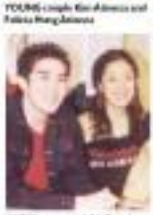
Clutching our newest glory Nissan were big boys who just love big toys, like Basil Ong, Vincent Flaviennie, JC Celayan, advertising top guy Song Perez and assistant vice president and artist Dominic Ochoa.

Vibrantly smart Julie Javier Aleng, special project manager of Nissan Motor Philippines, Inc. said it all in one sentence.

"I love people who to perform more and elsewhere or the 3 in for. For Nissan, it is definitely the Z," Right on, gal.

YOUNG couple Kim Alvarez and Felicia Wang Antonio

MEN'S WEEK Ayo Dugan and Jess Rapadas



GIRLFRIENDS and Ala Paredes, hosts of the joint CloseUp and City of Manila event

HUGE Carmen and Bianca Pabalan without the Lovapalooza kissing extravaganza along Roxas Boulevard on Valentine's eve

ALBERT Alexander also, Uniliver management trainee Loren Guevara and Paolo Santos

NISSAN sports project manager Julie Javier Aleng and car aficionado Mike Gimeno

BIG boys who love big toys, Alex Dee and Miguel Cuenco

LIN Yi Fu, Taiwan minister of economic affairs, Ambassador Wu Hsin Hsing, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office representative Lucian Lee, Nissan Motor Phils. president and CEO

VINCENT Flaviennie and Boy Ochoa

DOMINIC Ochoa, showing speed Nissan's sleek 350Z

THEY love sweet cars. Sonny Limsaeng, Sophie de los Reyes and George Sec

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photo by Alex Vitat Hugoso a Kodak Shot

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Healthy and refreshing green tea

RESERVA Green Iced Tea is a refreshing drink made from 100 percent natural green tea powder and completely portable too.

It is available in convenient, easy-to-prepare one-liter pouches.

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Antioxidants help protect the body from potentially harmful substances such as free radicals, which are naturally produced by the body but can damage tissues, cells and genes. They help lower blood pressure, reduce blood sugar and fight cancer.

Antioxidants protect cells from potentially damaging by-products created when oxygen is metabolized or used by the body. A growing body of research suggests antioxidant-rich foods and beverages may help prevent heart disease.

Green tea may also help improve skin texture and fight cavities and tooth decay.

Reserva Green Iced Tea, which can be enjoyed by people of all ages, comes in one-liter pouches (P300 each), six pack with six one-liter pouches (P1,800 each), six pack with 16 one-liter pouches (P2,100 each) and the Rainbow Pack with six cartons (P12,900 each).

Call 913-0828 to 29 or visit www.reserva.com.

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Seated hamstring stretch on stability ball

THIS EXERCISE stretches the hamstrings or muscles at the back of the thighs.

Equipment:

Stability ball. As a substitute, you can use a chair.

Exercise technique:

1. Sit at the edge of the ball with one leg extended straight in front of you and the foot flexed.

2. Bend forward from the hip until you feel the stretch at the back of the thigh.

3. Hold the stretch for the desired length of time, then repeat with the other leg.

Performance tips:

1. Lean forward from the hip, not the waist. Keep your chest open.

2. To increase the stretch, you can crouch for the torso of your right leg with your right hand.

3. Continue breathing as you hold the stretch.

Repetitions:

Hold for 15-30 seconds. Do once or twice.

Ephedrine diet pills to be banned soon

Viewpoint C2

Safety guidelines

If, in spite of all these warnings, you still decide to take illegally bought ephedrine diet pills, then at least try to follow these guidelines:

• Do not take products that contain both ephedrine and caffeine. Do not take ephedrine and continue to drink coffee or other drinks with caffeine. Mixing ephedrine and caffeine produces an effect similar to taking amphetamines.

• Do not take products that have more than eight milligrams per dose.

• Do not take more than 24 milligrams in 24 hours.

• Do not use the supplement for more than seven days.

• Do not use ephedrine if you have heart disease, hypertension, thyroid disease, diabetes, enlarged prostate, anxiety or glaucoma.

Aside from the fact that ephedrine will most likely be available in the black market, taking the supplement off the market may not make it that much safer for consumers since manufacturers are already selling "ephedra free" diet pills, which may also have adverse side effects. Next week, let's take a closer look at these products.

Note: The Association of Fitness Professionals of the Philippines (AFPP) will hold a one-day fitness seminar on Feb. 21, University of the Philippines Diliman. Topics include Conditioning for Swimmers, Aid Over Troubled, Yoga for Beginners and Aqua Conditioning. Call 0406077 or text 0917 5161161.

Visit www.fitnessforlife.ph

Eyewear for people who play hard

FRED Uytengsu Jr., family man and Alaska Milk president, is a sport enthusiast who has spent the last four years rigorously training for the triathlon.

The multi-sport event that includes swimming, biking and running, is a very demanding and exhausting activity. Uytengsu said. Of the four different triathlon categories, he said he prefers the Olympic distance, the most common of all triathlon races. It includes a 1.5-km swim, 40-km biking and a 10-km run.

The Alaska executive makes sure he has the right gear for the demanding competition. In the case of the triathlon, proper eyewear is important.

Uytengsu has opted on Oakley eyewear in his races. He said he was impressed by the quality of Oakley lenses which gave him great vision and adequate protection.

So lenses didn't fog when wet and water didn't stick to the lenses for a constantly unobstructed vision. Uytengsu added they also look good.

Protecting the eyes from the sun is an important using suntan lotion to prevent the skin from getting burned.

Oakley eyepieces are available at Alfredo Optical, Executive Optical, Magnet Optical, Optical Works, Seven Optical, Unique Vision, Shapes Optic, Ideal Vision Center, Bio, Georgia Optical, Sandra Optical and Care Time Plus.

Other Oakley premium items such as timepieces, apparel, footwear and accessories are exclusively available at Runner's Habitat, Alabang Town Center and Shangri-La Plaza; Extreme Phobias and Technolife, TX02 (Greenhills 3), Board Sporting House and Olympic Village.

FRED Uytengsu Jr. wearing Oakley shades.

Fresh and natural beauty aids

Your garden and your kitchen can give you a harvest of wonders

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

AT THE GROCERY one Sunday morning, I was approached by a woman who asked what kind of milk was needed for a face and body wash—was it fresh, canned or condensed? After she left, yet another woman asked what kind of sugar was needed for a body-effective exfoliation scrub.

Undiscovered wonders

There are many ingredients, fresh and natural ones, you can use sources directly from the kitchen. Or, better yet, your garden can give you a harvest of undiscovered wonders.

Basic ingredients:

- yogurt (whole, low-fat or non-fat)
- milk (fresh milk is better but other kinds are okay)
- oil (olive, virgin coco, soya or even cooking oil)
- water (purified, distilled, alkaline, rain water)
- baking soda
- oatmeal
- tea leaves
- moringa (any herbal preparation)
- veggies (cucumber, carrots, beets, potato, eggplant)
- herbs (basil, cinnamon, mint)
- fruits (avocado, papaya, apple, lemon, strawberry, orange)
- flowers (rose, sunflower, marigold)
- others (kaolin, cosmetrex, rose vodka, cornstarch)

Facial scrub: 1 cup of fresh milk (whether raw, carabao or goat) is all you need for a luscious, softening, gentle face cleansing regimen once a week. It will gently exfoliate your dead skin without any harsh side effects. You may leave it on your face for two minutes. Then rinse with cool water to close your pores.

Beauty thanks: Raw oatmeal is still the best mask for oily skin. Mix 1 tbsp in 2 tbsps of cold water and apply directly to the face. Leave on for 5 minutes or until the mask hardens. Rinse with cool water. You will immediately feel your face tightening.

Alcohol rips avocado is still my favorite mask for dry skin. Simply apply on clean skin and allow its rich oils to moisturize your face. Rinse with cool water.

Body polish: A loofah or scrub glove (from Body Shop) must be a regular item at bath time. Before your soaping and rushing (trust, pun on your glove, dig it in ultra-oil, then rub gently from feet to neck. Use a gentle creamy soap like Dove at this time. Your skin is guaranteed to feel soft instantly. This regimen is good for both men and women.

Men, in general, much prefer scrub action to remove stubborn dead skin. Said bruises their skin is thicker than women's, a firmer hit, not harsher rub is suggested. And can be mixed with any kind of oil, though virgin coco or olive oil is recommended.

Foot first: Feet need as much attention as the rest of the body. Sometimes a few minutes dip in a bowl of castor oil is enough to soften the soles of the feet. Better yet, an overnight soak with socks on will keep them soft.

Hands on: Your hands can age faster than your face, so, include them in your castor oil ritual. It is best to moisturize your hands 3-4 times a day with a light cream whenever possible, especially after washing your hands.

Bye bright: Runs up on caviar, two times a week. Some don't believe in its benefits but others are staunch advocates. At any rate, the best "food to wear you is a good night's sleep (supposedly before midnight).

A reminder: No matter how religiously you follow a health and beauty regimen, remember that you are only addressing the body from the most expensive of creams cannot replace a radiant aura.

A restless spirit, a troubled mind and an ailing heart will show. A calm, peaceful and loving self is the best "skin" anyone can wear.

Mood lift-er

Your hands touching the earth, or against a big tree with your back aligned to its trunk. Close your eyes and simply let go. Forget your worries and woes for a moment. Now imagine your cares leaving you from the soles of your feet, your back and hands. Allow the tree and the earth to absorb your negative feelings. Breathe slowly. Keep it till for 10 minutes.

Affirm, "Today's woes are gone from me for I am now healed. And so it is."

More recipes for body and soul soon.

Love and light!

A challenge to readers to think

Part 2

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licanco

TO MAKE the book "On Christianity: Some Age and Reincarnation (New Perspectives on Old Religions Issues)" interesting and satisfying enough for the average reader, I even included answers to such intriguing questions as, "what was really the fruit of the tree of knowledge that Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat in the Garden of Eden?" Also, "Was there really a romantic relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene?" "Where did Jesus Christ get all those new teachings he was preaching about?" and many others.

After I had put together all the materials for the book, and read them as a whole, I knew that I had written an explosive book, because it contained topics and answers to religious questions that were different from the traditional teachings of the Church and yet were not really irreconcilable with them.

For those who are used to hearing only the official answer to those questions, the book may be incredible. Meaning, as Sir Francis Bacon pointed out in his Novum Organum, that those who are searching for a more satisfactory explanation to them will find the book a great source of intellectual delight.

In anticipation of the objections that will surely be raised by the religiously conservative readers, I have included six pages of numerous bibliography and references so that they can read the sources themselves. I have used in writing this book. And there are indeed a lot of them.

I hope that those readers will take time to read some of those references. They will find that I have said nothing new in this book. These have been said before and probably said much more powerfully by others. But the average religious reader has no access to those sources. I hope to fill the gap in information with this book.

Finally, I would like to explain why I have dedicated this book to Socrates, the great ancient Greek Philosopher who was considered by the Oracle of Delphi to be the wisest of men.

I consider myself in the same situation as Socrates 2,400 years ago. He used to question the religious assumptions and political trends of his people. They considered him a pest, a gadfly—and so they put him in trial and sentenced him to death by drinking hemlock, a powerful poison. He was falsely accused of teaching false gods and corrupting the youth. If he had lived during the Middle Ages, he would have been burned at the stake, accused of witchcraft, and if he had lived in this century, he would have been accused of engaging in New Age and occultic practices.

Like Socrates, my objective in writing this book is not to change people's religious beliefs, but simply to challenge them to think about them. If we can accomplish that, we make significant contribution to see if they still make sense to them. If they do not, they had better look elsewhere for better answers, instead of following blindly religious authorities who may be as blind as themselves. For as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Conformity in behavior is a human necessity, but conformity is often a human danger."

The new book is now available in all branches of National Book Store, Powerbooks and Bibliophile.

Address letters to the column to 208 Prince Plaza 2 3206 Legaspi St., Greenhills, Mkati City. Call 8307243 or 8920800. E-mail jtlicanco@hotmail.com.ph. Visit my website at http://jtlicanco.tripod.com. Listen to my DZRH radio program every Sunday, 6-8 p.m.

Weight loss secrets

THE FIRST 2004 edition of the Healthy Options News Digest offers suggestions on how readers can adopt safe and natural measures to look and feel fabulous.

The cover story of the January/February 2004 issue of Healthy Options News Digest—"Weight Loss Secrets"—lists nine ways to go from thin to thin. The nine slim but wise options.

The publication is free to consumers of Healthy Options, the natural products store.

Other informative articles include "The Anti-Inflammation Diet", "White Foods: Should You Avoid Them?", "Inflammatory Syndrome: Root of All Evil?", "Banishing Antibiotics Naturally" and "Pregnancy: Are You High-Risk?"

"Health News" has more news and tidbits for healthy living.

The new Healthy Options News Digest are available at Healthy Options stores at Shangri-La Plaza Mall Edsa, Rustan's Makati, Greenbelt Makati, Festival Supermall Alabang, SM City North Edsa, SM City Manila, SM Megamall, SM City Sucat, Ayala Center Cebu and SM City Bacolod.

Visit www.healthyoptions.com.ph

New 'cure' for menopause blues

WOMEN experiencing menopausal symptoms may find relief in a new "therapy."

The "cure" is HRT—Humor Replacement Therapy. It is not a drug, but a musical comedy—"Menopause, the Musical" Written and produced by Jeanne Lindsey, a 54-year-old Florida event marketer, it promises the lighter side of an inevitable phase for women.

The musical is the latest project of Indagloat Productions, a team of women behind "Buwan" and "Care Bear Caravan." The group is composed of Margie Moran Floirendo, Bobbi Bermudez, Cosette Francisco and Mimi Hontiveros. Co-producers are Penny Florentino and Edith Alcantara of Music Museum.

The Philippine Society of Gynaecwic Medicine, an organization of physicians that specializes in menopause, among others, has endorsed the production.

Among the members of the cast of the musical set in New York are Sheila Francisco, Leah Navarro, Mitch Valdes and Sandy Javier. Leo Rialp directs.

"Menopause, the Musical" will run Wednesday and Saturday, March 3-April 3, at the Music Museum, Greenhills. Tickets are: Music, Wyeth, Gobeng Phil. Corp., Ionews, Carnation, Calcium Plus, Intelovet and Proactovet Dose Intensive.

Tickets are available at all Ticketworld outlets or through Ticketworld. Call 891-9999, 729-0825 or 721-5129.

Self-defense for you and me

Dulac, an indigenous form of martial arts, teaches effective techniques against armed and unarmed street attacks

Text by Ramona C. Burgos
Photos by Rony Hendiales

IT'S late and you're on your way home after work. You feel just a tad nervous as you walk down a deserted street toward your house. Then an attacker approaches you. Would you know how to defend yourself? Would you be strong enough to stop him?

To cancel that feeling of vulnerability, an increasing number of women are enrolling in self-defense classes like Dulac, which was developed by Antonio R. Vasquez (Ecu.) 10th

A Brahman term for Direct fighting, Dulac provides the all important aspects of a cardiovascular workout while teaching an indigenous form of martial arts. It involves bare hand self-defense techniques, which are effective against armed and unarmed attackers and multiple attackers.

One can also learn to deal with situations involving rape/molestation, cellphone/bag/jewelry snatching and armed hostage taking. Cos.

(GO TO PAGE 2)

WITH A BEAR HUG, an attacker keeps you from moving.

HIT your assailant with your left elbow. Then hit him again with your right elbow.

BEND and grab your attacker's left leg.

PULL his leg up and fall over your attacker.

GIVE the attacker a false sense of security.

TWIST your forearms inward while pushing your attacker.

QUICKLY assume sitting position.

LOWER your elbows into attacker's knees and lock his arms with your feet.

TWIST your body to the right and push him to the ground.

Self-defense for you and me

From page C3

trained classes are also offered for young and elderly women and male adolescents 15-18.

"It's all about becoming aware and empowered," says Vasquez, 42, who was named Grandmaster of the Year in the 2000 and 2001 United States Martial Arts Hall of Fame and National Training Camp. He was 13 when he took up martial arts.

A combination of Eastern karate, judo, jujutsu, aikido, kick boxing and silkido, Dulao has been recognized as an indigenous sport by the Philippine Indigenous Games and Sports Games Association, which is under the Philippine Tourism Authority.

"The association has 11 indigenous games," says Vasquez, who's also the vice president of the association.

Inner awareness

According to Vasquez, the first thing to understand about martial arts is that, in its purest form, it is about inner awareness: mental discipline, concentration, physical balance, coordination, leverage and flexibility.

"In fact, the most successful fighters who specialize in the external fighting arts begin their training by learning these inner skills before they learn the more visually impressive ones," says Michael Pujol, who is currently learning the basics of Dulao.

A sports game, which involves four people against four opponents, Dulao is simple and easy to learn.

"It's a peaceful form of martial arts. We don't create but defend. We're ready to strike back if necessary so we can save our lives or those of other people," Pujol says. "It requires intensive practice. Do it on your own until you learn it by heart."

Vasquez, together with Ramses Umarang, Anthony dela Peña, Christopher Lazaro and Marlon Andres, gives free Dulao demonstrations every Sunday, 3-5 p.m., at the Department of Tourism building in Manila. He and his group also conduct a five-hour course for seminars and professionals, wherein 25 attendees are presented and participants are taught how to get out of such predicaments.

"Participants are taught how to be ready even without weapons, bodyguards, companions, guns and how to save themselves," says Vasquez.

The five-hour course costs P2,000-4,000 per person, depending on the number of participants.

Vasquez shares the following self-preservation tips:

- Always be aware of your surroundings, regardless of the time of day.
- Follow your gut feel. "If you feel something's wrong then it's wrong," he says.
- Have your keys ready before approaching your car or the entrance of your home.
- Don't rummage through your purse in public.
- Never use a weapon you're unskilled in. "It's easy for an attacker to use it against you."
- Do not carry all your money in one spot.

Dulao Practical Martial Arts may be reached at 0215969 or 09/16-0451098 or e-mail at jb@superhome.com.ph.

E-mail the author at rbongalib@superstar.com.ph

Enjoy the convenience of automated game tickets

TIMEZONE introduces Powerticketers.

Tickets will now be avoided since, basically, to a powerboard and tickets were are automatically loaded onto the card for easy trading and storage of points.

Already customized for the fifteen system are Timezone powerboard centers like Greenhills 2, Glorietta 2 and Glorietta 4, Alabang Town Center Main and Cinema areas, Greenhills Theater Mall and Megamall. Timezone Ups and Cebu will follow soon.

Larry Sioco, deputy general manager of Timezone, says the new system makes it easy for customers to track down points earned. They also do not have to carry bundles of tickets around wherever they go.

With Powertickets, claiming of ticket points is easy. At the end of each game, the number of points tickets are is displayed on the yellow electronic monitor at the redemption machine where the customer played. The total power ticket balance can be viewed by swiping the powercard through the balance station in Timezone centers.

A customer can redeem prizes by simply handing over the powercard to the cashier who has it electronically read.

Timezone Centers are at Glorietta 2, Glorietta 4 and Greenbelt 1 of Ayala Center, Alabang Town Center main and cinemas, SM Megamall, Starmall, Mercuries, Greenhills Theater, Pavilion Mall, Ayala Center Cebu and the newly opened SM Lipa, Batangas.

TIMEZONE'S Powertickets system makes it easy for customers to keep track of points earned.

HOME hours of fun with Powertickets.

NBA's new star gets own line of sports gear

LEBRON James, the American National Basketball Association's newest sensation, is also the latest endorser of Nike.

The 19-year-old nicknamed "The King," has dazzled the crowd in his first NBA season with his sensational double-and-two-look passes.

As a tribute to its new endorser, Nike has launched its LeBron James 2004 Spring/Summer Collection with apparel, gear, bags, caps, socks and even game accessories like headbands and armbands. A LeBron James football jersey is also included in the collection, as the basketball star is also a big football fan.

Designers came up with a collection that was youth-inspired, which Nike called "retro-modern."

Visit the website at www.nikebasketball.com.ph.

LEBRON James is the latest Nike endorser.

Liposuction: A first-hand experience

By Kerry Sison

I MAY have to be chunked, but I will never forget the year 2000 as the year after my 32nd birthday.

While most of my closest friends are now married and have children, I took a different plunge. When did I always want for myself, I asked, that I could now get?

I thought about my big hips, thighs and inner tits, which have plagued me since grade school even when I was underweight.

I then decided to go for liposuction with none other than Dr. Vicki Belo, down to the nose, last August and September.

Result: I now have a bikini body—a sculpted figure marked by narrower (not by any stretch) thighs, waistband slits and a higher behind.

It's a body programmed to gain weight first on the chest and buttocks, not only. My gym has announced: 35-3-26-38. Read that after my measurements: 37-24-34, with irregular contour and no dent during the Christmas season!

For you imagine what I could have been had I been more disciplined.

I went in for two sessions, as Dr. Belo said did not want me to go "too much at the risk of my life," and I chose to go under local anesthesia.

In session one, my upper thighs were torn—the inner, outer and front are considered three different areas, while the knee, it's done, would count as four. I was then set to be taken to the ward.

The human mass, Dr. Belo assigned me, but by keeping the cap at the tallest point but removing the bulge at the sad darkness and back of my upper thighs. I now have longer-looking skin thighs and a tighter, muscled look.

Session two dealt with the issue of my stomach, hips and lower underside (more). Tweaks sure she let didn't grow back around them, Dr. Belo figured my total aided adjustment as well.

The bonus here: my body/look was around the same but I went up one cup size, from B to C, in the fat now stored there. The downside is, when sitting down, and not wearing tight tops, I look top heavy and people tell me so!

But learning to wear a pose, as I have to make do with the available limited styles at high prices.

Brave and daring

People called me brave and daring for agreeing to liposuction, but I didn't take the plunge just like that. I did my homework by researching on the topic.

Dr. Belo has performed around 10,000 lipo procedures (I had you not) with no fatalities or injuries, and she does the same strict with the limits doubt have, which by the way, is the fat limit. This means the entire process faster and less traumatic to the body.

Her constants, she noted with interest, are a lot smaller and thinner than the old ones—they stick thin rather than rough, and don't break. I was able to walk out of the clinic right after the procedure and bought the post-op medicine myself.

I understand that many other doctors still use the old lipo method, where they cow the fatty tissues in and out to disrupt the problem fat, then suck it out. In this case, healing takes much longer and patients are confined to bed for at least a week.

I, on the other hand, was roaming the malls after only two days, Binder and all. My doctor and her staff checked on me regularly by phone to make sure I was feeling okay. I was advised to walk a mile for exercise the day after the treatment to hasten healing.

Misconceptions

Dread pain—There was none! I was indeed sad did not even feel anything when they carried me without movement. I was assured to visit patients, but even so I was conscious throughout, I didn't feel a thing. The post-operation pain was akin to that of workout muscle pain. Definitely tolerable.

Instant Baywatch body—My way. I was blessed with only a weight equivalent to seven pounds of water right after, but that subsided in three weeks. My subtle and knee-lurked people for a week and the bloated disappeared. Post-actual body will emerge in three months after the swelling has fully subsided, but you can definitely wear smaller clothes after only a month.

Stage stitches and scars—Stays, stitches and incisions are the size of half a staples bullet, and done on their own after 48 hours.

Stripping buckets of blood... There was very little blood. The liquid oozing from the fat has 20-80 hours stuck in actually anesthesia, mixed with blood, hence the color. Take note that when you actually bleed, the wound is thick and black and in color. Here, the liquid is very watered down, hence the many visits one will forget rest/clothes.

The only hassle is wearing the body binder for 24 hours the first week and having to wash the underside for the first two days.

You are sure you as much as you want—Absolutely false! The truth is, if you are actively and platformed as you before operation, you can hit still migrate somewhere else.

In my case, I ate like there was no tomorrow after the procedure, as my old 35-inch waist bulldozed to 28, and my hips, which were 37, became 38 in a month and a half. Good thing I was scheduled to have those done lipo-ed, too.

After my full stomach and hip lipo, I was more excited. Due to the holidays, though, I still gained and, hence the new size. I noticed my tummy area fill up, eat, too. Now, I'm watching my big time and controlling my meals.

Cellulite will disappear—Cellulite cannot be eliminated by liposuction, but, yes, there is marked improvement. Four free sessions of Endermologie is included in the package for cellulite removal and skin-toning three months after lipo.

People tell me, "If you know the hassle involved, would you do it again?"

And I always say "It's a heartbreak!"

I had exercised like a madwoman and dieted, but my hips were always big and my stomach never flat. I was seriously overweight (no, for those stubborn areas

BEFORE

AFTER

BEFORE

AFTER

Flower power in new product

PROTECT your skin from the harmful effects of environmental factors with the help of rare Peruvian Inkrose Body Moisturizer from Nu Skin.

Inkrose lasts from the sun, cold night breeze, dust and dirt—all that can damage the skin, causing dryness, roughness and blahness.

Developed Inkrose Body Moisturizer is the first all-over body lotion formulated with BIO Dominia. It is derived from the Nusiana flower which contains elements with protective qualities to help build and store energy for skin renewal.

It helps preserve the complement's cellular structure, moisture content and nutrient supply to better protect against daily environmental stress.

Nu Skin's Personalized Inkrose Body Moisturizer will help the skin to renew its cellular durability and restore its natural defense mechanism.

It will protect the skin from dehydrating elements to the environment to preserve its beauty and health.

Contact Nu Skin Philippines Inc.'s Distributor hotline at 6359111 or log on to www.nuskin.com.ph

Skin care for smart women

DIACRIEL, a leading skin care supplement, is a smart way to complement a daily cleansing, toning and moisturizing routine. Discerning women know that to influence the quality and structure of the skin a more profound approach is needed with special skin care nutrients.

Intelpro developed the "skincare from within" and combines to innovate, the Intelpro Time Protection, anti-oxidant hexapeptide and proprietary extract was harnessed in the patented Lycopherol 20 formula designed to add a powerful dimension to the anti-

FIRST-CLASS spa amenities at the Ellis Shangri-La Health Club

Lifestyle of comfort and fitness

EDSA Shangri-La introduces a lifestyle concept involving unused fitness, relaxation and comfort.

The new Edsa Shangri-La Health Club, designed and executed by PDP Architects, has a white feature in the jacuzzi and cold plunge area. Subdued cream walls, plants and stone accents were chosen to create calm and serenity. Crystal glass mosaic tiles are featured in the shower rooms, and silver glass mosaic tiles, modernized faucets and work rounds in the hand washing area.

Edsa Shangri-La's new health club offers state-of-the-art equipment for cardiovascular and resistance training such as the Life Fitness Treadmill 9573, one of the first in the Philippines. The spring surface floor in the gymnasium enhances the fitness experience.

The cushioned flooring reduces impact on the joints and muscles.

Club members have free use of leisure facilities such as swimming, gated tennis courts, Jacuzzi, cold plunge, sauna and a lagoon design swimming pool. The pool side has even a kids wood facilities from Australia, Indonesia.

Both and shower facilities, complimentary towel service, a lounge area, refurbished locker rooms and efficient service from well-trained staff enhance comfort and convenience.

Club members enjoy preferential rates on massage services and weekday spa therapy.

Edsa Shangri-La spa offers two new luxury body treatments—Java Rice (olive flower and the Balinese Bomb. The Javanese Java, called from the royal palaces of Central Java, Indonesia, is a mix of natural ingredients and spices for refreshing, relieving bruises, muscle and joint pains, making the body, uplifting and stimulating, body uses pairs of natural ingredients to refresh and restore the skin's pH balance, leaving it smooth and supple.

Other treatments available are aromatherapy Massage, Lavender Lift Facial, Hair and scalp Treatment, Marvis Iron Body Mask, Aromatherapy Sea Salt Body Scrub, Aromatherapy Toning Thalassotherapy Bath, Swedish Massage, Shiatsu and Combination Massage. Call 6359888 locals 2901-2904.

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What is a deductible? Do I have to pay for it?

Typically, "deductibles" do not apply to MEDICard's services as we guarantee outright coverage for covered illnesses. A deductible applies to other types of medical plans, such as indemnity (insurance) plans. It is the part of a member's eligible expenses that is paid (out of pocket) each year before their plan begins to cover a percentage of the eligible expenses.

Meet your MEDICard Team

Believed to be one of the only two female practicing Urologists in the country is MEDICard accredited specialist, **Dr. Ma. Immaculada Corazon C. Unabia.** Dra. Mikee, who also subspecializes in Female Urology, is based in St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City. She finished her studies in Medicine at the De La Salle University and then took her residency for her specialization in Urology at East Avenue Medical Center. She earned her training for her subspecialty at the Singapore General Hospital. Members may visit her for their consultation needs at Room 206 of the Medicard 6th Bldg. every Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 1 to 3 PM.

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